MARVEL

BLACK WIDOW

WIDOWMAKER

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BLACK WIDOW

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BLACK WIDOW: DEADLY ORIGIN #1-4

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LETTERER **Blambot's Nate Piekos**
COVER ART **Travel Foreman** & **June Chung**

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INKER **Álvaro López**
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COVER ART **Jae Lee** & **June Chung** (#1) and **Phil Noto** (#3)

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COVER ART **Jae Lee** & **June Chung** (#2) and **Phil Noto** (#4)

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BLACK WIDOW:
DEADLY ORIGIN 1

THE FRINGES OF SPACE, HIGH OVER NEVADA.
OKAY.
I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE.

WHAT?
I'M NOT YOUR PARTNER.
I *REPLACED* HIM FIVE MINUTES BEFORE YOU STOLE THIS PLANE.
THE C.I.A. SHOULD BE STRIPPING DOWN HIS CEREBRAL CORTEX ABOUT NOW.
YOU KNOW ALL THOSE THINGS I SAID "*CHECK*" TO DURING THE PRE-FLIGHT ROUTINE?
YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK SOME OF THEM AGAIN.

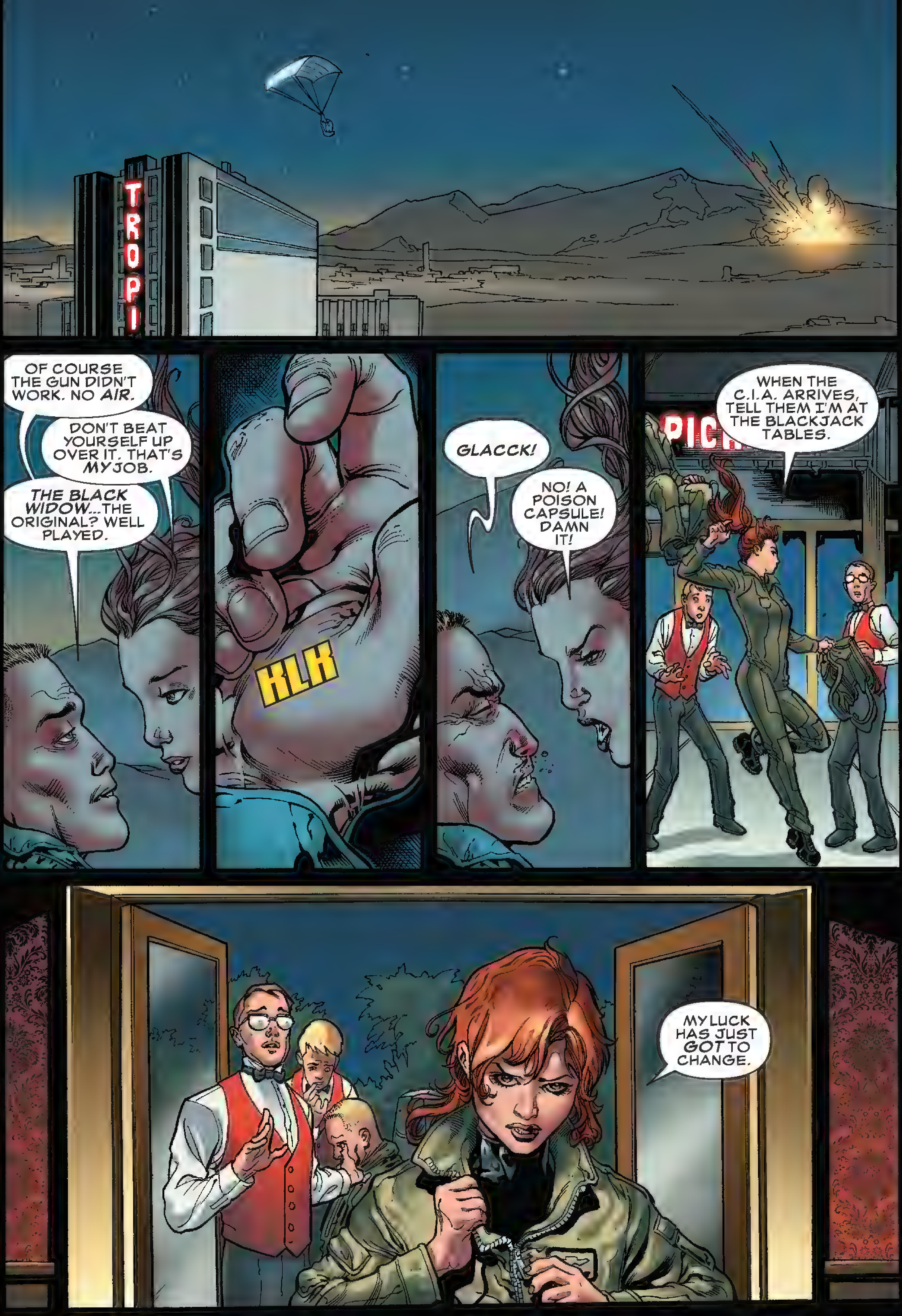
WELL. *THAT* CHANGES THE GAME.
BLEEP
I JUST SET OFF THE BOMB IN MY PARTNER'S HEAD. HE PROBABLY TOOK SEVERAL C.I.A. OFFICERS WITH HIM.
TIK
WELL.
THAT CHANGES THE GAME.
I'M STILL GOING TO BRING YOU BACK FOR INTERROGATION.
ONCE I'VE FOUND OUT WHERE YOU'RE MEANT TO TAKE THIS AIRCRAFT.
BUT NOW I'M HAPPY TO *HURT* YOU IN THE PROCESS.
OH YEAH? WELL NOW YOU CAN'T FLY HER--
--THERE GOES THE GROUND CONTROL LINK I GUESS YOU WERE RELYING ON.
SO NOW *I'M* IN CHARGE. MY GUYS GET TO INTERROGATE *YOU.* AND YOU MAY WELL ASK YOURSELF: WHAT SORT OF INTELLIGENCE OFFICER ALLOWS THIS TO HAPPEN?
ZZZRCH
ONE...
TEC
...WHO IS ALWAYS WILLING--

--TO DIE FOR THE MISSION.
KRAK

WHAK
WHUD
CHAK
SMAK
GUHH--!
KRAK
KLIK

HNNN--
VFOOM
CLICK
WHA--?
KRAK

HNNN...
K-CHAK
SHOOM


TROPI
OF COURSE THE GUN DIDN'T WORK. NO *AIR.*
DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP OVER IT. THAT'S *MY* JOB.
THE BLACK WIDOW...THE ORIGINAL? WELL PLAYED.
KLK
GLACCK!
NO! A POISON CAPSULE! DAMN IT!
PIC
WHEN THE C.I.A. ARRIVES, TELL THEM I'M AT THE BLACKJACK TABLES.
MY LUCK HAS JUST *GOT* TO CHANGE.

BLACK WIDOW: DEADLY ORIGIN

RUSSIAN ARMY SUPPORT SERVICES COMMAND. POST 18, KALININGRAD, RUSSIA.
<NO, REALLY, THEY SAY NEXT YEAR WE GO DIGITAL!>*
<YEAH, RIGHT. TEN YEARS BEHIND THE REST OF THE WORLD.>
*TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN.
<THEY SHOULD JUST SCRAP THIS OLD JUNK AND START AGAIN.>
<I MEAN, WHO KNOWS WHAT HALF THIS STUFF ACTUALLY DOES?>
<NATALIA ROMANOVA... KNOWN AS NATASHA ROMANOFF... THE BLACK WIDOW...>
<...ICEPICK PROTOCOL INITIATED.>

VOLGOGRAD, RUSSIA.
HUH... HUH... HUH!
BLEEP BLOOP
NEW YORK CITY.
BREEP BREEP BREEP
WHA--?
<IVAN?!>
<AFTER ALL THESE YEARS! WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?!>

<THERE'S NO TIME.>
<'TASHA, THE ICEPICK PROTOCOL HAS BEEN ACTIVATED.>
<I DON'T KNOW HOW OR WHY-->
<ICEPICK? WHAT IS--?>
<IT'S BEEN ASSIGNED TO YOU!>
<'TASHA, I--!>
AIEEEEEEEE--!
386
BWA-DOOOM!
IVAN?!

TALINGRAD, USSR, 1928.
<IVAN! THERE'S NOBODY LEFT IN HERE! THE IMPERIALISTS WENT ROOM TO ROOM!>
< YOU'RE NOT GOING TO FIND YOUR SISTER IN HERE, MATE!>
<WAIT! I HEARD SOMETHING! OVER THERE!>
<COMRADES, COMRADES, PLEASE--!>
<YOU LOOK LIKE THE COMRADE GENERAL SECRETARY HIMSELF!>
<I KNOW YOU'LL LOOK AFTER NATALIA. PLEASE UNDERSTAND-->
<SHE'S A ROMANOFF, BUT-->
<"INDEED, IVAN--">

MOSCOW, USSR, 1938.
<--ROMANOFF, THE FAMILY NAME OF THE CZARS. THE NAME OF THE FORMER TYRANTS, EH? >
<BUT THERE ARE LOTS OF US, AND WE'RE NOT ALL RELATED TO THEM.>
<INDEED, SOME OF US HAVE PROSPERED UNDER COMMUNISM.>
<THAT'S WHY I SOUGHT YOU OUT, COMRADE ROMANOFF.>
<I'M OFF ON MILITARY SERVICE, AND...WELL, I'D BE THANKFUL IF SOMEONE HIGH UP IN THE PARTY TOOK A PATERNAL INTEREST IN MY NATALIA, RATHER THAN THOSE ORPHANAGES...>
<THE PEOPLE'S ORPHANAGES ARE EXCELLENT, COMRADE.>
<OF COURSE, COMRADE, THE FINEST IN THE WORLD. BUT SHE IS...MY LITTLE GIRL...>
<YES, YES! IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DEMONSTRATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL PUTTING HIS TRUST IN THE SOVIET SYSTEM!>
<COMRADE... GENERAL SECRETARY STALIN?!>
<I JUST HAPPENED TO BE TAKING A STROLL IN THE PARK. HA HA HA!>
<WHEN I ENCOUNTERED THIS MOMENT OF PURE COMMUNIST SYNTHESIS!>
<I BELIEVE COMRADE TARAS ROMANOFF HAS A SCHOOL WHICH WILL SUIT LITTLE NATALIA. HE CAN PUT SUCH ABLE PUPILS TO GOOD USE FOR THE PEOPLE.>
<AND IF THE PUPIL IS NAMED ROMANOVA*...WELL, THAT'LL SHOW SOMETHING TO THE WORLD!>
HA HA HA!
*THE FEMALE FORM OF ROMANOFF.

TRAINING FACILITY NEAR MOSCOW, USSR, 1940.
SHE NOW SEES ME AS HER FATHER, LOGAN. AND SINCE SHE CALLS YOU *"LITTLE UNCLE"*--
LOGAN, THE FUTURE WOLVERINE, ON SECRET ASSIGMENT.
YOU SAYIN' WE'RE *BROTHERS,* TARAS?
I'M NOT SAYING A THING.
<NATALIA, WHEN YOU'VE COMPLETED THE EXERCISE -->
"--COME AND HAVE TEA WITH COMRADE LOGAN AND I.>"
<NATALIA, DO YOU REMEMBER A SOLDIER CALLED IVAN?>
<NO, DAD.>
SEE?! DIDN'T I *TELL* YOU?!

SO--
--WHO ARE YOU REALLY?
REALLY?
NO IDEA!
HAH!
ME NEITHER!
BUT I THINK--
--WE'LL BOTH HAVE A *LONG TIME*--
--TO FIND OUT.
KID, DON'T TROUBLE YOURSELF WITH THE *FUTURE*.
FOR PEOPLE LIKE *US*--

"--THE *FUTURE'S* JUST ANOTHER *BAD DAY.*"
THREE MONTHS LATER.
NATALIA?
<IVAN, LOGAN KILLED TARAS. THAT WAS HIS MISSON HERE.
<I LET HIM GO.>
<AND YOU'VE BEEN LIVING OUT HERE SINCE THEN?>
<WHEN I HEARD, I WENT AWOL FROM MY UNIT, I HAD TO FIND YOU-->
<DO YOU KNOW *WHY?*>
<NATALIA, WE HAVE TO GO. THEY WILL *BLAME* YOU, AND THEY WILL *EXECUTE* ME-->
<I LET HIM GO BECAUSE I DECIDED I LIKED *HIM* MORE THAN I LIKED *TARAS.*>
<THAT WAS IT. THAT WAS *ALL THERE WAS.*>
<AND I STILL DON'T FEEL BAD.>
<ENOUGH OF THAT.>
<I'M HERE FOR YOU NOW-->

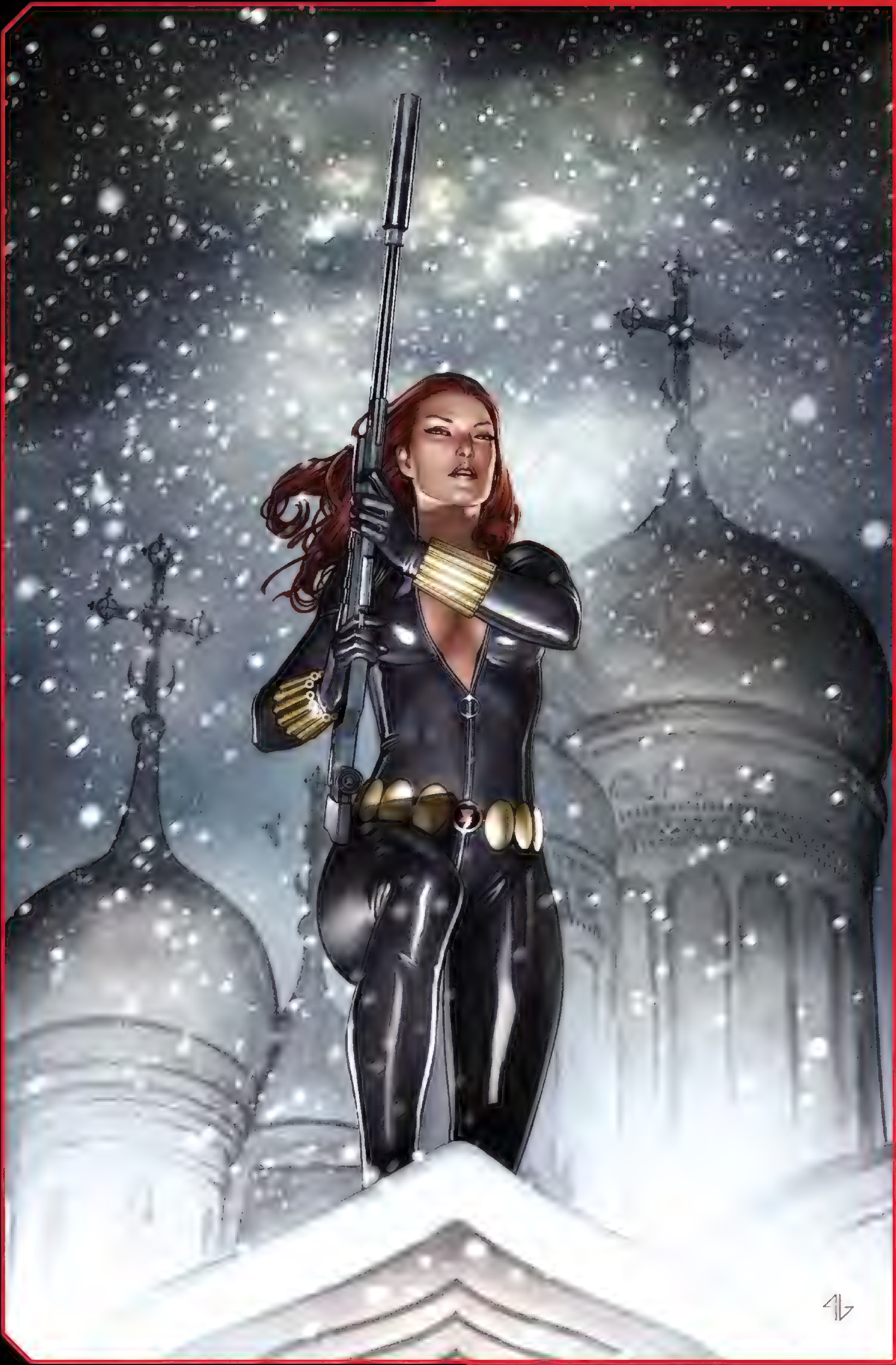
<"NO MATTER HOW MANY NAZIS WE HAVE TO KILL-->"
"<--WHO WE HAVE TO WORK FOR TO BE FREE-->
"<--I'LL *NEVER* LEAVE YOUR SIDE.>"

BERLIN, 1956:
...URGH...
<IVAN, I GOT SOME WATER... THE GANGS LEFT NOBODY ALIVE. I CAN'T FIND A MEDIC.>
<TAKE THIS, I'LL TRY AGAIN.>
<JUST *YOU* FROM NOW ON...>
<...PROUD OF YOU. MY LITTLE GIRL-->
<THE COMRADE NEEDS MEDICAL TREATMENT.>
<MY SUPERIORS OFFER YOU *BOTH* THIS CHEMICAL IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR RENEWED LOYALTY.>
<IT WILL HEAL HIM--AND INCREASE YOUR LIFE SPANS. BUT THERE IS AN EXTREMELY LIMITED SUPPLY, COMRADES.>
JAMES BARNES, THE WINTER SOLDIER, BRAINWASHED SOVIET SUPER-AGENT.
<DON'T... DON'T...>
<WE SAY *YES*.>

VOLGOGRAD MORGUE. THE PRESENT.
<LET ME THROUGH, I HAVE TO SEE IVAN'S BODY.>
<WE'RE WAITING FOR THE POLICE, YOU *MUSTN'T*-->
<WHAT IS--?!>
ИЗМЕННИКУ ПРОТОКОЛ ЛЕДОРУБ
ВСЕ ТЕБЕ ЛЮБИМЬ УМРУТ, РОМАНОВА
<"ICEPICK PROTOCOL, FOR A TRAITOR.">
<IT SAYS EVERYONE I LOVE WILL DIE.>
<*INTERESTING.*>
<I'M GOING TO EXAMINE THE BODY NOW.>
<THEY TOOK HIS *HEAD?!* SO HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS IS REALLY HIM?>
<FROM EVERY BLOOD TEST, EVERY GENETIC TEST...NOW, WILL YOU PLEASE-->
<OH. YOU'RE RIGHT...>
<IT'S HIM.>

NATASHA?
JAMES BARNES, NOW A FREE MAN. AND UPGRADED. ENOUGH OF A BOYFRIEND TO USE HER NICKNAME.
I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED. SO IF YOU WANT TO *TALK*, OR IF YOU WANT ANY HELP WITH, YOU KNOW--
--*WORKING* THIS?

I COULD JUST USE SOME MORAL SUPPORT, JAMES.
BECAUSE WHAT I'M GOING TO DO IS *THIS...*
...FIND EVERYONE I "LOVE"...
--YOU INCLUDED. DON'T ARGUE AND DON'T ASK--
...SEE THEYRE PROTECTED...
...FIND OUT WHAT THIS "ICEPICK PROTOCOL" IS...
...AND WHO'S USING IT...
...BRING *EVERYTHING* THEY ARE CRASHING DOWN...
...KILL EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM...
...AND TOAST IVAN IN THE *BLAZING RUINS.*
COULD BE *TRICKY.*



BLACK WIDOW:
DEADLY ORIGIN 2

BLACK WIDOW: DEADLY ORIGIN

CHAPTER TWO

RUSSIAN ARMY SUPPORT SERVICES. COMMAND POST 18, KALININGRAD, RUSSIA.
<IT'S LIKE NONE OF THIS IS *REAL*.>*
*TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN.
<IT MIGHT AS WELL NOT BE.>
<BACK IN THE COLD WAR, THE GUYS IN CHARGE HAD *ALIEN* TECH, *ALTERNATE REALITY* TECH...>
<...EVEN THE CAST-OFFS OF *GODS*.>
<IT'S LIKE OUR INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY...OF ALL THAT POWER...>
<...IS A *FANTASY*.>
<AND NOW WE DON'T KNOW HOW ANY OF IT WORKS.>
<WE'RE JUST LIVING IN THE *RUINS*.>
<I GATHER I HAVE THE HONOR-->

<--OF ADDRESSING ONE OF THE BLACK WIDOWS.>
<TELL ME: HOW WERE YOU PLANNING TO GET THROUGH THERE?>
<I WAS JUST GOING TO USE MY OWN HAND, EXPECTING THEM TO TREAT IT AS A FAULT AND LET ME IN.>
<I GATHER I HAVE THE HONOR OF ADDRESSING ONE OF THE...?>
<**FEDERAL** DYNAMOS. I WAS HOPING ONE DAY TO MAKE PROMOTION TO CRIMSON DYNAMO. BUT ALL MY WEAPONS SYSTEMS ARE LOCKED ON YOU, AND STILL I HAVE A HORRIBLE FEELING-->
<--YOU'RE GOING TO WORK ME OVER...>

"<...LIKE I WAS THE SUPER HERO YOU *MARRIED*.>"
MOSCOW. OFFICE OF GENERAL PUSHKIN. 1957.
<COMRADE COLONEL SHOSTAKOV, COMRADE ROMANOVA, PLEASE EXCUSE ME...>
<...I'M CALLED AWAY ON BUSINESS. I'LL LEAVE YOU KIDS TO GET BETTER ACQUAINTED.>
HA HA HA.
<PLEASE, CALL ME ALEXEI.>
HA HA HA!
<CALL ME WHATEVER YOU *LIKE*.>
<BUT MY NAME'S NATALIA.>
<SO, NA... TASHA!>
<WHAT DO *YOU* DO TO SERVE THE GLORIOUS ADVANCEMENT OF THE WORKER'S PARADISE?>
<WHAT DO I--?>
<I... I...>

"<I'M ONE OF 28 YOUNG BALLERINAS WITH THE BOLSHOI.>
"<THE TRAINING IS HARD-->
"<BUT THE GLORY OF SOVIET CULTURE-->
ЗАВОД-ПОСТАВЩИК
"<AND THE WARMTH OF MY PARENTS-->
"<MY... PARENTS... MAKES UP FOR...>
"<NO... NO, THAT'S NOT RIGHT...>

"<I'M ONE OF 28 BLACK WIDOW AGENTS WITH THE RED ROOM-->
"<THE TRAINING IS HARD-->
"<BUT THE GLORY OF SOVIET SUPREMACY-->
"<AND THE WARMTH OF MY PARENTS-->
2
3
"<*ALL* MY... PARENTS... MAKES UP FOR...>
"<YOU'LL HAVE TO... EXCUSE ME...>"

<A SECRET AGENT? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?>
<HOW OLD ARE YOU?>
SEVENTEEN.
TWENTY-NINE.
<AND I SHOULD TELL YOU, I'M-->
<SINGLE.>
<SEEING SOMEONE.>

SIX WEEKS LATER. SOVIET SPECIAL FORCES BARRACKS.
<THANK YOU, COMRADE-->
<--FOR COMING HERE IN PERSON TO TELL ME OF YOUR FORTHCOMING MARRIAGE. WE WERE SWEETHEARTS, NOW WE ARE NOT.>
<IT'S A GREAT HONOR, TO MARRY A TEST PILOT HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION.>
<YES, COMRADE WINTER SOLIDER.>
<I ONLY FEAR THAT SUCH A MARRIAGE MAY LESSEN MY USEFULNESS TO THE BOLSHOI...>
<NO, THAT'S MY COVER STORY. I MEAN, TO THE RED ROOM...>
NATALIA?!
<THEY GAVE ME LEAVE TO COME AND SEE YOU.>
<OBVIOUSLY, WHAT I HEAR ABOUT YOU GETTING MARRIED-->
<CAN'T BE TRUE.>
<IVAN!>
<I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW PLEASED I AM TO SEE YOU.>
<I CAN'T TELL *WHAT'S* TRUE ANYMORE.>

AHH--!
FWOOSH
<WHAT IS--? CAN'T SEE!>
SPLOK
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
YAHHH!!!
TEK
BWA-KWAM

TEN MINUTES LATER.
<HE'S STILL ALIVE!>
<GET THAT TROLLEY IN HERE!>
<WAS IT A SUIT MALFUNCTION?>
<ON THE CAMERA, IT LOOKED LIKE HE WAS TALKING TO SOMEONE, BUT THERE WAS NOBODY VISIBLE...>
<COMING THROUGH!>
<SOMEONE CALL SUIT TECH!>
<THE ALARM MUST BE A DRILL, A GLITCH!>
<NO, I HEARD THE EXPLOSION!>
<GOOD AFTERNOON, GENTLEMEN...>
<OH NO.>
<WE ARE SO DEA-->

<NOT NECESSARILY.>
<I'VE LOCKED OFF THIS SECTION. WE HAVE A LITTLE WHILE.>
<TELL ME WHAT I NEED TO KNOW...>
<...AND YOU CAN CLAIM I FORCED IT OUT OF YOU AT THE POINT OF MY TERRIFYING STEALTH WEAPONS-->
<--WHILE ACTUALLY ENJOYING THE INFINITE AIR MILES I'LL REWARD YOU WITH-->
<--AND BEING ABLE TO SAY YOU HAD A DRINK WITH THE *ORIGINAL BLACK WIDOW*.>
<THE *ORIGINAL*?>
<THE ONE WHO MARRIED THAT SUPER HERO, THE RED GUARDIAN?>

"<YES, FOR A WHILE. THEN THEY TOLD ME ALEXEI DIED IN A ROCKET EXPLOSION.>
"<THEY DIDN'T LET ME KEEP ON BEING THAT PERSON.>"
BAIKONUR COSMODROME. 1963.
FWA-BLAM
<SO YOU ARE A WIDOW NOW...>
<I'M SORRY, COMRADE KRUSHCHEV-->
<IF THAT WAS A JOKE, I DON'T UNDERSTAND.>
<I AM AN ORDINARY SOVIET HOUSEWIFE.>
< MY TEST PILOT HERO HUSBAND ALEXEI IS DEAD, A CASUALTY OF THIS RACE TO THE MOON THAT THE AMERICANS HAVE INFLICTED ON US. >
<I REQUEST TO BE ASSIGNED TO MISSIONS AGAINST THE WEST!>
<TO INFILTRATE AND DESTROY THEIR TECHNOLOGIES!>
<FOR SOME REASON I FEEL I HAVE SKILLS I CAN OFFER-->
<WOMEN I CAN BE!>
<COMRADE, YOU MUST-->
<SHUT UP! I DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING!>
<NATASHA, I'M SORRY. GIVE IVAN AND ME A MOMENT TO TALK.>

<--IT WAS *NECESSARY* TO CREATE THE FICTION OF YOUR DEATH!>
<IT WAS FOR *THE BEST*. FOR EVERYONE.>
<YES, COMRADE PREMIER-->
<SHE WAS...SHE WAS...>
<HUSH, RED GUARDIAN, HUSH!>
<SHE WAS HARD TO LIVE WITH.>
<SHE WANTS TO BE A MOTHER, A SWEETHEART-->
<BUT THEY MADE HER *BARREN*, AND A...AND A...>
<*SHH...*>
<PERHAPS SHE WILL ELECT TO DIE IN BATTLE.>
<PERHAPS SHE'LL FIND A NICE, UNDERSTANDING, AMERICAN CHAP-->
<--SHE IS GOING TO GIVE THEM-->
<--AND THEN WE'LL ALL BE SCREWED. BUT WHATEVER-->

<BLOODY HELL ON A BICYCLE.>
<I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THE SYSTEM COULD *WORK* LIKE THAT!>
<HERE WE ARE. *THE ICEPICK PROTOCOL.* ANY OF YOU HEARD OF IT?>
<*ICEPICK?!*>
<I HEARD IT WAS SOMETHING PUT TOGETHER BY THE MOB.>
<OR ISLAMIC TERRORISTS.>
<OR WITCHES.>
<I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST AN URBAN MYTH.>
<WELL, ACCORDING TO THIS-->
<OH, NO...>
<THE RED ROOM.>
<THEY'VE FINALLY MADE ME...>
<...WHAT THEY ALWAYS *WANTED* ME TO BE.>

SEVERAL YEARS AGO.
A PARTY GIRL, THAT'S ALL.
SHE'S A GREAT DEAL MORE THAN THAT, TONY!
NATALIA "NATASHA ROMANOFF" ROMANOVA--
SO MANY SEXY RUSSIAN NAMES.
--HAS BEEN ON THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL SCENE, ACROSS EUROPE, FOR DECADES.
WITHOUT SEEMING TO AGE A DAY.
SHE'S CONTINUOUSLY BEAUTIFUL.
AND ALWAYS CLOSE TO WEALTHY YOUNG TECHNOLOGY BROKERS.
WHO DO NOT COME TO GOOD ENDS!
STAR
ROMANOVA, NAT
PEPPER, DO I SENSE A LITTLE CRUSH?
BECAUSE YOU KNOW STARK INDUSTRIES ENCOURAGES DIVERSITY--
--AND I MONITOR THAT COMMITMENT PERSONALLY.
YOU'RE NOT HITTING ME WITH THE CLIPBOARD. THIS MUST BE SERIOUS.
THEY CALL HER THE BLACK WIDOW!
THE THINGS THEY SAY ABOUT HER--!
TONY, SHE MATES AND THEN SHE KILLS!
THEN ALL I HAVE TO DO--
--IS LEAVE AT THE RIGHT MOMENT.

TONY, YOU KEEP COMING BACK TO MY HOUSE.
I LIKE THE VIEW.
YOU KNOW I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU.
WELL *THAT'S* UNFORTUNATE.
I LIKE YOU A GREAT DEAL, NATASHA... BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU *ARE.*
AND ONE DAY YOU'LL--I DON'T KNOW--PUMP ME FULL OF DRUGS AND STEAL MY SECRETS...
FOR ONE OF THE MANY AGENCIES WHO EMPLOY YOU.
I *KNEW* YOU KNEW.
I THOUGHT YOU LIKED THE DANGER.
YOU ACTUALLY DON'T KNOW ME VERY WELL.
I DON'T LIKE DANGER AT ALL.
THAT'S WHY--
--I HAVE THIS PLACE SURROUNDED BY AUTOMATED WEAPONS.
AND NOW I'M GOING TO WALK OUT OF HERE.
AND I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AGAIN--

"--WHEN YOU'VE DECIDED TO BE A *REAL* PERSON."
A YEAR LATER.
TONY STARK! THAT'S ALL YOU TALK ABOUT!
I THOUGHT IT WAS *YOU AND ME* SINCE HE LEFT YOU! HAWKEYE AND THE BLACK WIDOW, PARTNERS IN CRIME, OUT TO BRING DOWN STARK AND SELL HIS SECRETS! SIMPLE!
BUT IT'S REALLY ALWAYS YOU, ME *AND HIM!*
CLINT BARTON, HAWKEYE.
HE'S A *MAN OF POWER,* CLINT.
A MAN WITH A LOT OF... *SKILLS...*
YOU WANT THIS TO BE A CONTEST?!
I KNOW YOU'RE MANIPULATING ME! AND I DON'T *CARE!*
I'LL BRING YOU STARK'S *HEART* ON AN *ARROWHEAD!*
'TASHA...
<WHAT DO YOU WANT, IVAN?>
<WHY DO YOU KEEP PLAYING THE *FEMME FATALE?*>
<YOU DON'T *HAVE* TO KEEP FINDING EMPLOYERS WHO WANT TO MAKE SUPER HEROES FIGHT EACH OTHER.>
<WHEN WILL YOU FIND SOMEONE *WHOLE* TO BE?>

<ANYONE I WAS CLOSE TO FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME....>
<...WAS INFESTED WITH *NANITES*. MICROSCOPIC BIOMACHINES.>
<THEY *TAGGED* ME WITH THEM.>
<AND I PASSED THEM ON.>
<I ONCE PLAYED A SEXUAL PREDATOR. BUT THAT WASN'T *ENOUGH*.>
<THEY MADE ME INTO MY CODE NAME.>
<THEY MADE ME *FILTHY*.>
<LITERAL COOTIES! *UGH!*>
<DON'T SAY THAT! IT'S A TERRIBLE THING, A *SEXIST* THING!>
<YOU'RE *SUCH* A NEW MAN, YURI!>
<BUT SURELY AFTER ALL THIS TIME THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT--?>
CLATTER
<YOU GO, GIRL!>

THE NEXT DAY.
CLINT BARTON, NOW CALLED RONIN.
OW!
OW OW OW!
CLINT--
--MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE PUT YOUR SHIRT ON BEFORE FRYING THOSE EGGS?
WELL, THAT WOULD ONLY HAVE BEEN SENSIBLE.
BUT SENSIBLE SAYS I SHOULD HAVE KEPT ON BEING HAWKEYE FOR THE *OFFICIAL* AVENGERS, INSTEAD OF GOING WITH THIS UNDERGROUND CREW.
SENSIBLE SAYS I SHOULD HAVE HESITATED TO FLING MYSELF INTO A LIFE OF YOU AND ME ON THE RUN.
SO, I PUT IT TO YOU, BOBBI--
--YOU REALLY DON'T *WANT* ME SENSIBLE.
LIKE I *GET* A CHOICE.
AND...

BOBS?
HELLO?
YOU OKAY?
<ICEPICK ACTIVATED.>

CAPITALIST SABOTEUR!
DIE FOR THE HAPPINESS OF THE PEOPLE!

BLACK WIDOW:

DEADLY ORIGIN 3

JAMES BARNES' APARTMENT, TEMPORARY H.Q. OF THE AVENGERS. THE PRESENT DAY. POTENTIAL VICTIMS: CLINT BARTON AND BOBBI MORSE.
KREESH
NO!
THIS THING ISN'T GOING TO GET YOU TOO!
ZKOW

'TASHA?!
WHAT--
QUIET, PLEASE, CLINT--
--I'M--
CRACK
--WORKING.
WHUD

I JUST LEARNED I'VE PASSED *NANITES* TO EVERYONE I WAS CLOSE TO, AND THEY PASSED THEM ON IN TURN TO THOSE CLOSE TO *THEM*. THEY'RE BEING ACTIVATED TO CREATE A *PSYCHOTIC RAGE*.
PLEASE UNDERSTAND, BOBBI--
--THIS IS FOR YOUR *OWN GOOD*.
MHM!
WHAT *WAS* THAT?!
TELL ME SHE'S GOING TO BE *OKAY*.

HER PULSE IS NORMAL, SHE SHOULD WAKE SOON.
I'VE INJECTED MYSELF WITH *COUNTER-NANITES* SUPPLIED BY AN OLD FRIEND. THE KISS WAS THE QUICKEST WAY TO--
WELL...
...TOUCHING HER WITH MY PALM WOULD HAVE DONE IT, TOO. LIKE THIS.
BUT WHY DO WE WEAR THESE COSTUMES IF NOT FOR THE *THEATER?*
'TASHA...
I ONLY JUST GOT HER BACK.
I THOUGHT SHE WAS *DEAD.* AGAIN.
YOU BRING THIS TROUBLE TO MY DOOR, YOU *LAUGH* ABOUT IT...
IF THIS IS YOU TRYING TO *PROVOKE* ME AGAIN, LIKE IN THE OLD DAYS--
THAT'S *EXACTLY* THE REACTION THEY WERE AFTER, WHOEVER DID THIS.
"YOU CAN'T TRUST HER. SHE'S MESSED UP. *DIRTY.*"
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW FAR IT'S GONE--
--WHY I *HAVE* TO LAUGH ABOUT IT.

"TONY STARK HAS DISAPPEARED. MAYBE A VICTIM OF THIS THING.
"IT GOT AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE. SHE'S A TEACHER NOW. OR SHE *WAS.*
"HER HUSBAND KILLED HER, THEN HIMSELF.
"THERE WAS A SMALL BOY WHO DELIVERED MY NEWSPAPER. I ALWAYS USED TO MUSS HIS HAIR--
"I COULDN'T EXPLAIN TO HIS MOTHER WHY SHE SAW MY FACE AS SHE STRANGLED HIM."

THEY REMOVED IVAN'S BRAIN, WE THINK, TO SCAN IT FOR DATA ABOUT THE TARGETS--
--SO THEY COULD TEASE THIS OUT, ONE BY ONE, NICE AND SLOW.
GOOD TIMES, EH?
SO FORGIVE ME IF I MAKE THE OCCASIONAL *JOKE*.
GOD, 'TASHA. WE'LL HELP YOU--
YOU CAN...
...BY LETTING ME DO THIS. NOT BY BEING A *SUPER HERO*.
LET ME GET HER BLOOD ANALYZED. WHEN I FIND OUT WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR SPREADING THE NANITES--
--I DOUBT I'LL ACT LIKE A SUPER HERO THEN.
TELL JAMES I'LL BE BACK TO SEE HIM LATER.
'TASHA--!
BEING A "*SUPER HERO*"...
...THAT'S WHAT *SAVED* YOU.

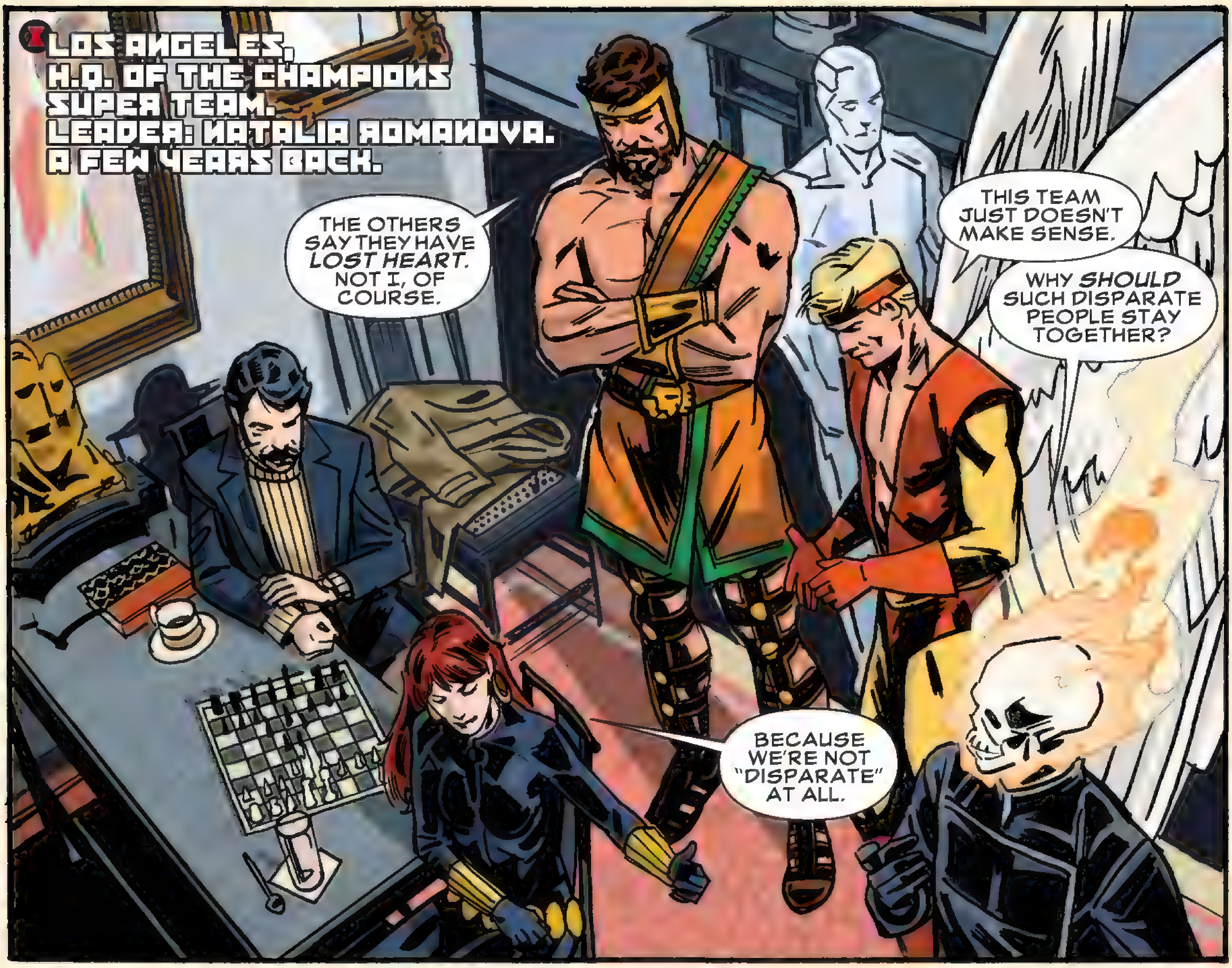
SAN FRANCISCO, THE APARTMENT OF MATT MURDOCK, DAREDEVIL, A FEW YEARS AGO.
BEING A COSTUMED ADVENTURER--
--IT FEELS...
GO ON, SAY "DECADENT" AGAIN.
IN YOUR ACCENT, IT TURNS ME ON.
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, NATASHA.
JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT THIS FIXATION THAT YOU'LL ALWAYS HURT THE ONES YOU LOVE--
MATT...
...I STILL FEEL MANIPULATED.
NOT BY YOU. YOU'VE LET ME START TO HEAL. BUT I'VE HAD MY MIND INTERFERED WITH SO MANY TIMES...
...I STILL FEEL LIKE THERE'S SOMETHING...
...I CAN'T TRUST.
'TASHA...MR. MURDOCK--

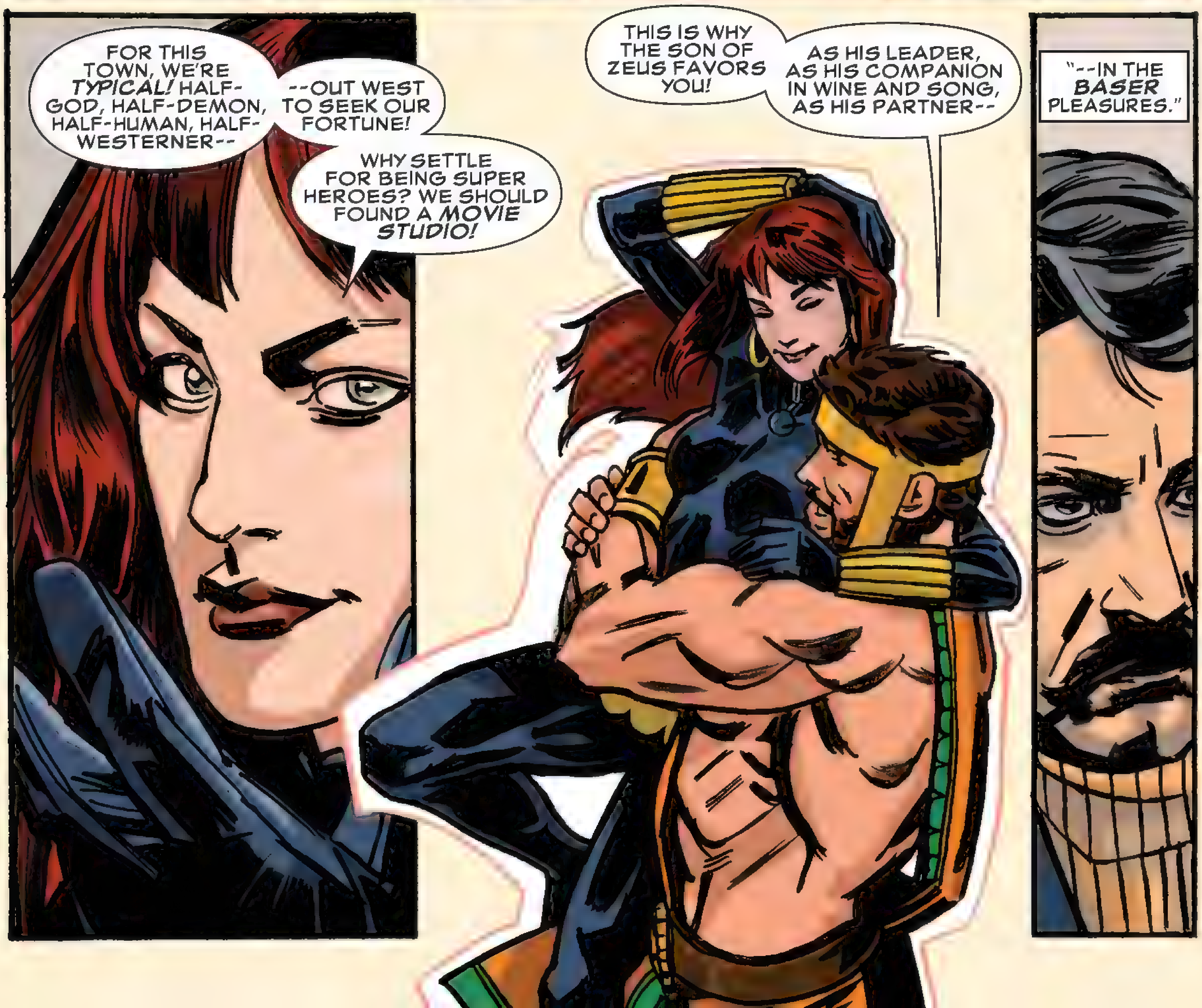
--THE TELEVISION NEWS SAYS THAT "THE OWL" AND "MR. HYDE" ARE ROBBING A BANK.
I THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW.
ON OUR WAY! THANKS, IVAN!
I CAN SEE YOU'RE JUST *BRIMMING* WITH ENTHUSIASM!
<HE'S A *CHILD!*>*
<HUSH, IVAN--!>
<I FOLLOWED YOU TO THE U.S.A. TO LOOK AFTER YOU, 'TASHA-->
<NOT TO BE A...LIVE-IN CHAUFFEUR!>
*TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN.
<WHEN I ASKED YOU TO FIND SOMEONE WHOLE TO BE...>
<...DID IT HAVE TO BE A WESTERN SUPER HERO?>
<I THOUGHT *YOU AND I* COULD FIND...>
<...SOME SORT OF RESOLUTION...>
<...*TOGETHER.*>

NEW YORK, HELL'S KITCHEN. NOW.
THAT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A LONG TIME AGO.
YOU AND IVAN NEVER LIKED EACH OTHER, BACK WHEN YOU WERE SO CAREFREE.
YOU'VE BECOME RATHER MORE *LIKE* HIM NOW.
NATASHA...
I HAVE A LOT TO DO. TO PASS ON THIS CURE. TO STAY SAFE.
AND IF YOU MISS THOSE DAYS, REMEMBER--
--IT WAS *YOUR* CHOICE TO MOVE ON.
I GUESS NOW *I DO* KNOW HOW IVAN FELT.

AN HOUR LATER.
CLINT AND BOBBI SAID TO SAY "THANKS." THEY LOOKED KIND OF...SHEEPISH.
GOOD. IS SHE OKAY?
BACK TO HER OLD SELF. SHE SAID TO CALL HER IF YOU WERE STILL "CURIOUS," AND CLINT GOT ALL DEFENSIVE.
HAH!
DON'T YOU THINK KHRUSHCHEV WOULD HAVE LAUGHED TO SEE US NOW?
I GUESS WITH THE OLD SOVIET DIALECTIC--
--THEY LIKED US BEING TWO THINGS.
THE WINTER SOLDIER AND CAPTAIN AMERICA...
ONLY I'M MORE THAN TWO THINGS, JAMES. THIS PLAN SEEMS DESIGNED TO REMIND ME OF HOW... SPLINTERED...
YOU COULD BE...IF YOU WEREN'T SO TOUGH.
THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE IMMUNE.
GUESS THEY THOUGHT OF ME WHEN THEY DESIGNED THOSE THINGS.
LOGAN JUST GOT "SORT OF A HEADACHE."
I HAVE TO KEEP GOING, THERE ARE STILL LOTS OF--
VRRINNNG
EXCUSE ME...
HERCULES?! I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND YOU--
WHAT?!

MANHATTAN, THE GOLDEN FLEECE NIGHT CLUB.
IS THIS MOST UNWORTHY BATTLE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THAT VISION I JUST HAD OF YOU, NATASHA?
AS IN PAST DAYS, I AM NOT BENEATH ASKING SUCH A GREAT LEADER AS YOURSELF--
--FOR A LITTLE HELP, PLEASE!


LOS ANGELES,
H.Q. OF THE CHAMPIONS
SUPER TEAM.
LEADER: NATALIA ROMANOVA.
A FEW YEARS BACK.
THE OTHERS SAY THEY HAVE *LOST HEART.* NOT I, OF COURSE.
THIS TEAM JUST DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
WHY *SHOULD* SUCH DISPARATE PEOPLE STAY TOGETHER?
BECAUSE WE'RE NOT "DISPARATE" AT ALL.


FOR THIS TOWN, WE'RE *TYPICAL!* HALF-GOD, HALF-DEMON, HALF-HUMAN, HALF-WESTERNER--
--OUT WEST TO SEEK OUR FORTUNE!
WHY SETTLE FOR BEING SUPER HEROES? WE SHOULD FOUND A *MOVIE STUDIO!*
THIS IS WHY THE SON OF ZEUS FAVORS YOU!
AS HIS LEADER, AS HIS COMPANION IN WINE AND SONG, AS HIS PARTNER--
"--IN THE *BASER* PLEASURES."

PRESENT DAY, AN HOUR LATER.
AH, IT *IS* JUST LIKE OLD TIMES.
THE SON OF ZEUS AND HIS LOVER AND GENERAL HAVE FELLED MANY FOES!
FORMER LOVER. JUST IN CASE YOU WERE ABOUT TO SUGGEST WE *"CELEBRATE,"* AND OF COURSE YOU WERE.
YOU CERTAINLY HAVE YOUR SHARE OF EX-GIRLFRIENDS.
BUT IN *YOUR* CASE, ALL THE STORIES ARE *JOLLY.*
BECAUSE I'M A MYTH.
BECAUSE YOU'RE A *MISTER.*
BUT IN THAT *MYTHOLOGICAL* WAY OF YOURS--
--I THINK THERE'S ONE MORE HEROIC THING YOU CAN DO FOR ME...

IF I WERE TO SET OFF ON A QUEST TO FIND THE SOURCE OF THIS EVIL...
...I FEEL IT WOULD SET SAIL...
...IN *THAT* DIRECTION.
the Golden Fleece
NOTHING VISIBLE, BUT THEN, THERE *WOULDN'T* BE.
IF I COMBINE THAT BEARING TOGETHER WITH HOW THE NANITES FROM BOBBI'S BLOOD LINE UP IF YOU PUT A CURRENT THROUGH THEM...
...I SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET A BEARING...
AH...
I MAY NOT KNOW *WHO* MY ENEMIES ARE--
--BUT THANKS TO YOU, NOW I KNOW *WHERE* THEY ARE.
THEN I FEAR FOR THEIR HEADS, THEIR LIMBS AND THEIR ORGANS OF GENERATION!
HERCULES! SURELY YOU DON'T THINK I WOULD EVER BE SO...
...MERCIFUL?

A SECRET LOCATION. NICK FURY, FORMER DIRECTOR OF S.H.I.E.L.D., SPY CHIEF ON THE RUN. THE NEXT DAY.
DAMN IT, WIDOW!
I ALREADY GOT YOU THOSE COUNTER-NANITES! IF I GIVE YOU THE ACCESS CODES TO A H.A.M.M.E.R. GOVERNMENT LAUNCH FACILITY--
--IT'LL TIP THEM OFF TO JUST HOW MUCH WE KNOW ABOUT THEIR OPERATION.
AND THE REASON YOU'RE GETTING ANGRY IS...?
'CAUSE YOU GOT TO ME IN TIME TO SAVE ME FROM HAVING TO FIGHT SOME PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT.
SO I OWE YOU.
AND SO, OBVIOUSLY--
--I'M GOING TO DO IT.
BESIDES, IF WE'RE EVER GONNA GET OUR COUNTRY BACK TO WHERE IT SHOULD BE, THERE'S GONNA COME A TIME WHEN WHAT YOU ARE IS HONORED AGAIN. I MEAN--

NEW YORK, AVENGERS MANSION. A FEW YEARS AGO.
"--YOU BEING A FORMER LEADER OF THE AVENGERS."
<AND I'VE BEEN ELECTED TO *LEAD* THEM! IT'S A *HUGE* RESPONSIBILITY, BUT-->
<IT'S THE HIGHEST HONOR FOR A WESTERN SUPER HERO.>
<SO...>
<...YOUR JOURNEY IS OVER.>
<YOU HAVE HAD MANY ADOLESCENCES, MANY ADULTHOODS, MANY MATURITIES, AND IN THE END, YOU HAVE DECIDED TO BE ONE THING-->
<--*THIS* THING.>
<IVAN, WITH ALL YOUR INTELLIGENCE EXPERIENCE, YOU COULD BE A GREAT HELP, WITH THIS.>
<THAT WAS NOT MY CALLING.>
<*MY* JOB, MY FELLOW IMMORTAL, WAS TO WATCH OVER YOU. AND WAIT FOR-->
<--FOR YOU TO BE *HAPPY*.>
"<I WONDER, NATALIA, IF THAT WAS WHAT I WAS WAITING FOR, ALL THIS TIME?>
"<INSTEAD OF MAKING A LIFE OF MY *OWN*?>"

LONG ISLAND. H.A.M.M.E.R. LAUNCH FACILITY. PRESENT DAY.
PRE-FLIGHT CHECKS...DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS COCKPIT EVEN FROM INSIDE IT...OKAY, NEVERMIND!
TAKE-OFF!
FRWAMMMMMM

LA GRANGE POINT ACHIEVED. STABLE EARTH ORBIT ATTAINED. STEALTH MODE ENGAGED.
I'M RECORDING THIS IN CASE I DON'T MAKE IT--
--BECAUSE THERE'S NOBODY TO HELP ME NOW.
I THINK MAYBE THIS IS THE POINT IN SPACE AND TIME I WAS ALWAYS *DESTINED* TO REACH--
--AND THE WORLD HAS TO BE TOLD--

"--ANOTHER INSANE MONSTER FROM THE PAST--
"--SOMETHING FROM THE SOVIET DRAWING BOARDS--
"--SOMEONE ACTUALLY *BUILT* IT.
"SOMEONE BUILT THE *DREADNOUGHT*."

TRYING TO FILM THE DETAILS--
"--I SEE WHAT I SUPPOSE SHOULD BE CALLED IMPERIAL DYNAMOS.
"AS ALWAYS, KEEP THE TESTED DESIGN, CHANGE THE FLAG."
BUT NOBODY IN RUSSIAN POLITICS IS AN IMPERIALIST NOW.
AT LEAST NOT UNDER THE FLAG OF THE CZARS.
SO WHO WOULD BE MAD ENOUGH TO--
OH...

NEW YORK. KENNEDY AIRPORT. A FEW YEARS AGO.
<YOU NEVER UNDERSTOOD...>
<I DIDN'T WANT TO BE YOUR FATHER. OR YOUR GUARDIAN. OR YOUR UNCLE. OR YOUR FRIEND.>
<I WANTED *MORE* THAN THAT.>
<IF I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND...>
<...IT'S BECAUSE *I WANTED* THE FATHER, THE GUARDIAN, THE UNCLE AND THE FRIEND.>
<WELL, THEN-->
<--THERE'S OUR DIALECTIC. OUR CLASH OF *OPINIONS* FINALLY DEFINED.>
HA HA HA!
<AT LEAST NOW I KNOW-->

"<--WHY I KEPT HURTING MYSELF.>"
IVAN.
OF COURSE IT'S YOU.

BLACK WIDOW:
DEADLY ORIGIN 4

NEAR-EARTH ORBIT...
IVAN.
SO MY OLD FRIEND WASN'T *MURDERED.*
"HE DID IT TO *HIMSELF.*
"IF ANYONE HEARS THIS MESSAGE, GET THE INTEL TO NICK FURY. IVAN HAD HIS OWN BODY DESTROYED...
"...EXCEPT FOR THE *BRAIN* AND *SPINAL COLUMN,* WHICH HE'S APPARENTLY HAD TRANSPLANTED INTO SOME SORT OF METAL--
"--*MONSTER.*"

BLACK WIDOW: DEADLY ORIGIN

CHAPTER FOUR

<"NOBODY EVER DIES!">

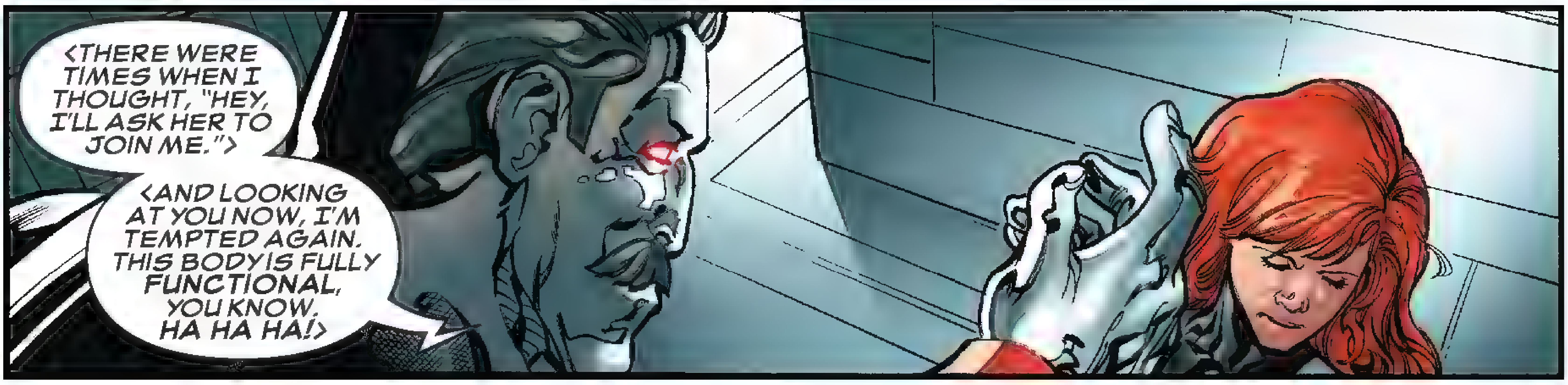
A FEW YEARS AGO, PARIS.
<EVEN IF YOU THINK THE AVENGERS ARE DEAD, THAT YOU'RE THE LAST...>
<THEY'LL BE BACK, 'TASHA.>*
L'ILE
*TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN.
<IT'S WHAT WESTERN SUPER HEROES DO. RESURRECT THEMSELVES.>
<AND IF THEY ARE GONE...>
<YOU COULD JOIN ME. I'VE BEEN GETTING MY OWN PLANS TOGETHER. BIG PLANS.>
<WE STILL WORK WELL TOGETHER. I'M STILL YOUR GUY IN EUROPE, AREN'T I?>
<YOU'VE HAD YOUR CHANCE TO BE NATALIA FOR THE WORLD.>
<MAYBE IT'S TIME TO GO BACK TO BEING MY LITTLE NATASHA.>
<THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE.>
<NATASHA?>

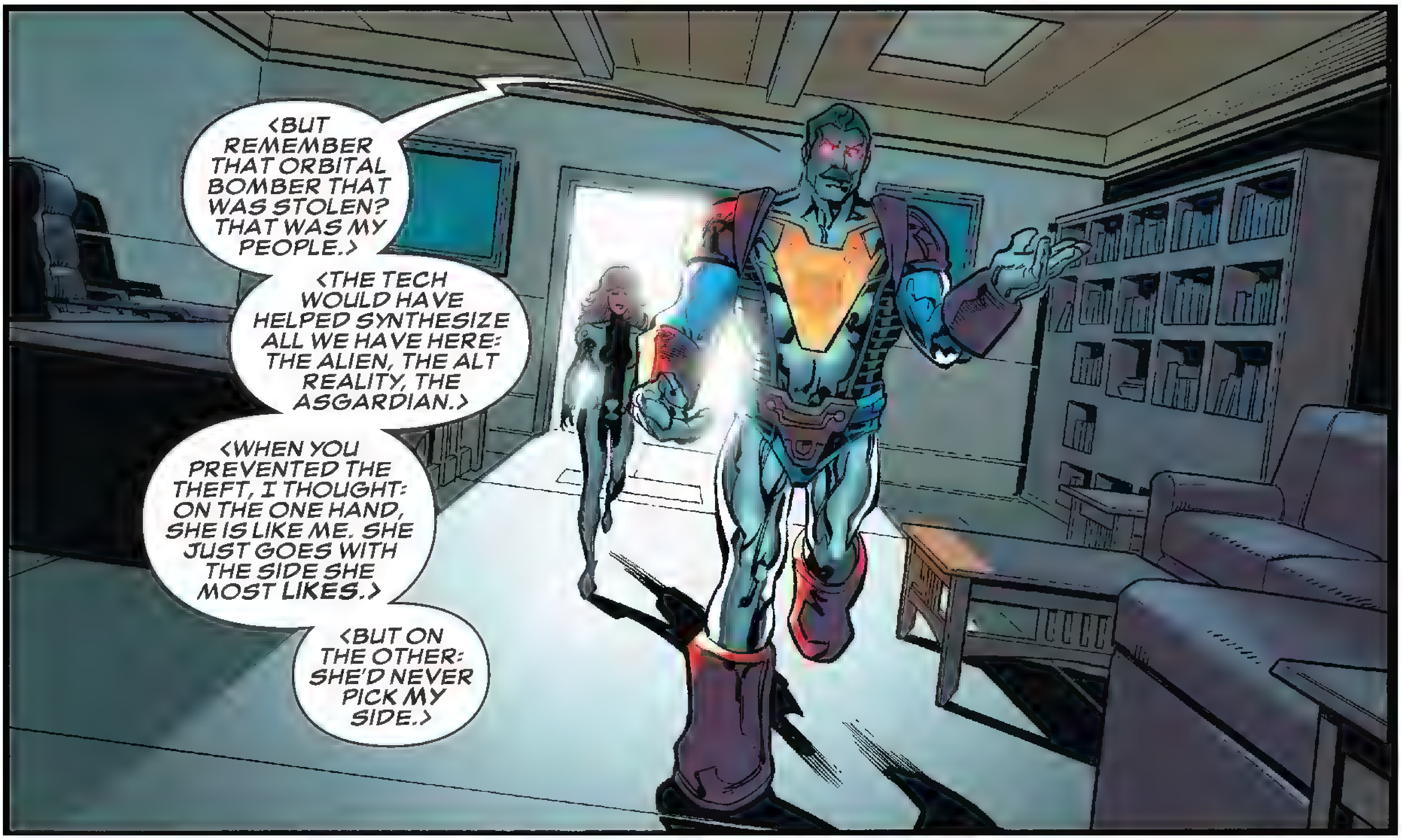
THAT *KISS.*
THEN THAT CODEWORD TO ACTIVATE THE NANITES HE'D JUST *INFECTED* ME WITH...
I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED--
<SHOULD YOU, 'TASHA?>
<YOU NEVER THOUGHT THIS OLD DOG COULD BITE YOU.>
<NOT STRAIGHT-FORWARD, HONEST OLD IVAN! >
<YOU'RE THE ONE WITH ALL THE EXPERIENCE AT...>

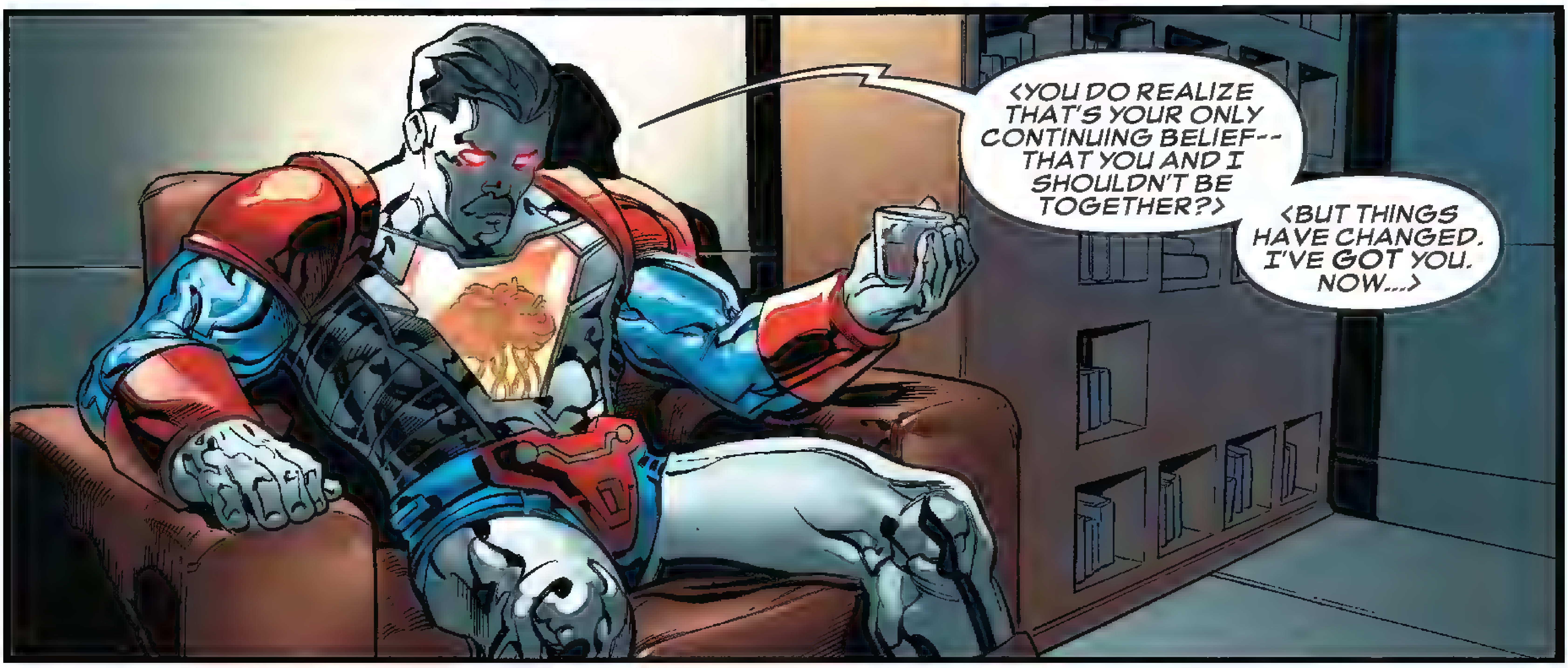
BETRAYAL!
THAT'S WHAT THIS IS!
TWO YEARS AGO, DURING THE SUPER HERO CIVIL WAR, NEW YORK CITY. STEVE ROGERS: CAPTAIN AMERICA.
STEVE, PLEASE...!
THAT'S WHY I WANTED THIS MEETING. TO EXPLAIN TO YOU...
WHY I CAN'T TAKE YOUR SIDE.
IT DOESN'T MEAN I'VE CHOSEN TONY STARK OVER YOU.
MEN ALWAYS THINK--
I DON'T.
I JUST THINK HE'S RIGHT. PEOPLE WITH POWERS HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY, TO WORK TOGETHER.
I'VE SEEN THE AVENGERS RIPPED APART SO MANY TIMES!
SO...
NOW YOU'RE FOR AN IDEOLOGY?
FOR TONY'S CONTROLLING CONCEPT OF THE STATE?
BECAUSE YOU WANT TO STOP GETTING HURT.
THAT'S ALL YOU STAND FOR? A CYCLE OF ABUSE?
THAT SOUNDS LIKE YOU GIVING UP.

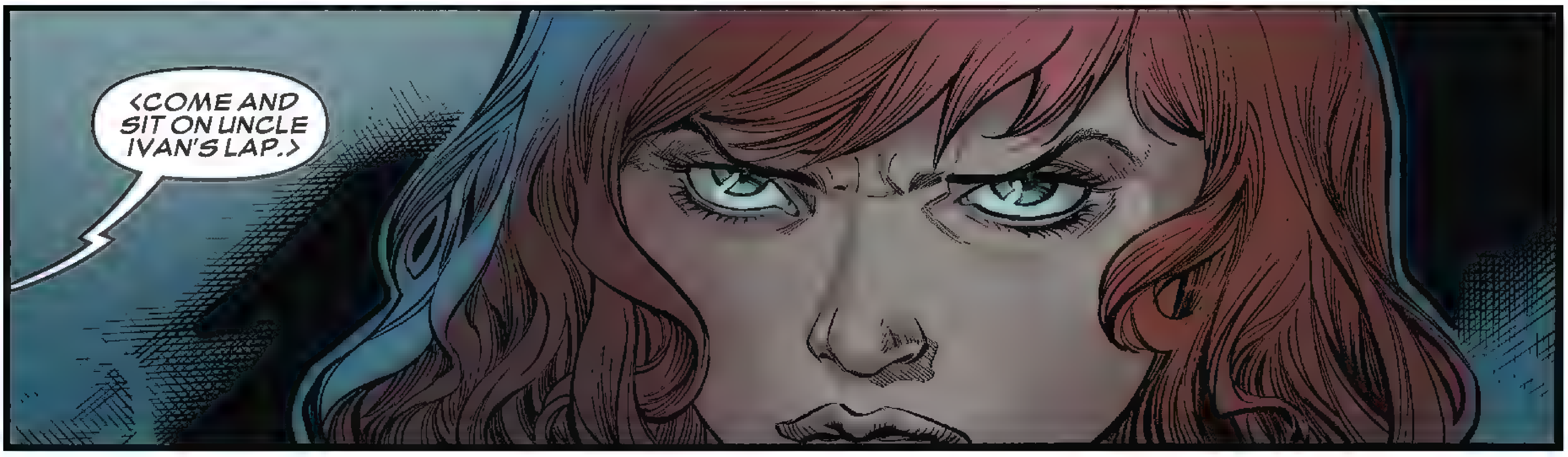
IF YOU REALLY BELIEVED THIS, YOU WOULDN'T TALK ABOUT HOW HISTORY HAS SHAPED YOU.
YOU'D JUST SAY YOU'D DECIDED.
YOU'RE *FREE*, NATALIA. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO HAD TO FIGHT HARDEST FOR THAT.
YOU'VE NEVER NEEDED A MAN TO TELL YOU.
DAMN YOU. YOU DON'T KNOW HOW *TIRED* I AM.
LISTEN, EVEN IF IT TURNS OUT I'M ON THE WRONG SIDE, IT MAKES SENSE FOR ME TO STAY CLOSE TO TONY--
SO THEN...
...YOU CAN JUST BETRAY *HIM* TOO?
I'M SORRY. THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY TO SAY IT.
"<A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAIN YOU'VE CAUSED...>"

<...A VISIT TO EVERY FAILED RELATIONSHIP. ALL THOSE MEN WHO WEREN'T ME...>
<...BEFORE I FINALLY LET YOU DIE.>
<THAT WAS MY PLAN FOR YOU, 'TASHA. THAT'S WHY I TOLD YOU ABOUT ICEPICK.>
<BUT YOU HAD TO GO AND RUIN THAT TOO.>
<IVAN, THIS IS THE SERUM TALKING. THE CHEMICAL THAT'S KEPT YOU ALIVE FOR YEARS. IT'S MADE YOU -->
<NO, I THINK IT WAS YOU WHO MADE ME MAD, 'TASHA.>
<AT LEAST LIKE THIS I'M MAD AND INVULNERABLE.>
<IT LOOKS TO ME LIKE YOU'VE BECOME A WESTERN SUPER VILLAIN.>
<YOU KNOW, LIKE YOU ALWAYS HATED?>
YOU'RE KEEPING ME TALKING, SO I'LL EXPLAIN MY SECRET PLANS.>
<BUT THAT'S NOT HOW THIS WILL BE.>
<I CAN ORDER WHAT'S INSIDE YOU TO KILL YOU. JUST BY THINKING IT.>
<SO, BEST KEEP ME HAPPY, EH, 'TASHA? HA HA HA!>
<COME ON...>
<LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT I MADE!>









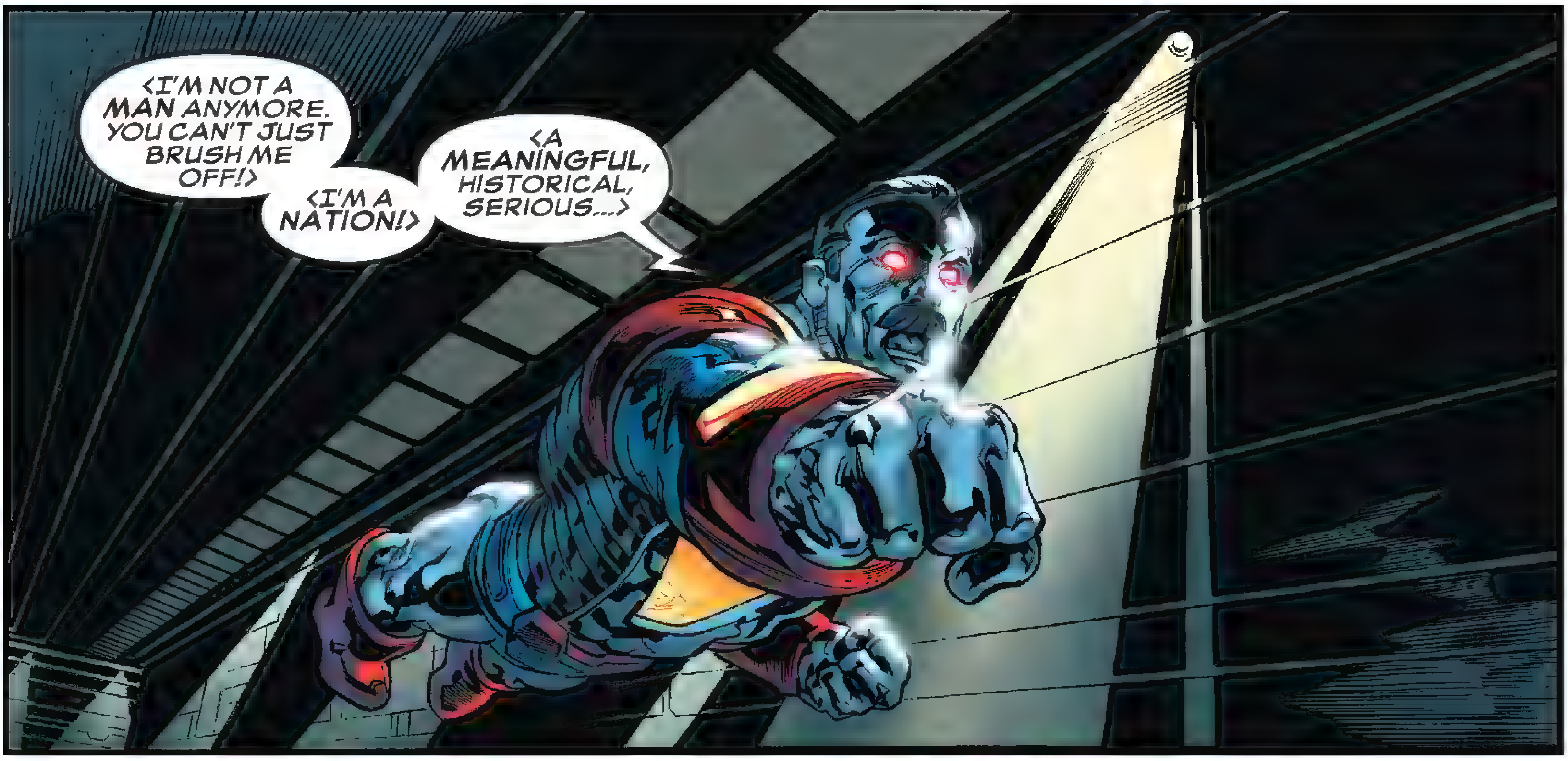
FOUR YEARS AGO, NEW YORK.
YELENA, I ACCEPT YOU'RE THE LATEST BRILLIANT GRADUATE OF THE RED ROOM...
BUT YOU HAVE TO SEE YOU'RE BEING *MANIPULATED*. YOU HAVE TO DO THE RIGHT THING.
YELENA BELOVA: THE NEW BLACK WIDOW.
THREE YEARS AGO, NEW YORK. A SHORT-LIVED ALLIANCE OF HEROES.
I AGREE. HUNTING DOWN THE PUNISHER IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.
LAST YEAR, NEW YORK. JAMES BARNES: THE WINTER SOLDIER.
JAMES, I'VE DECIDED: WORKING WITH YOU, TO HONOR CAPTAIN AMERICA'S MEMORY...
IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

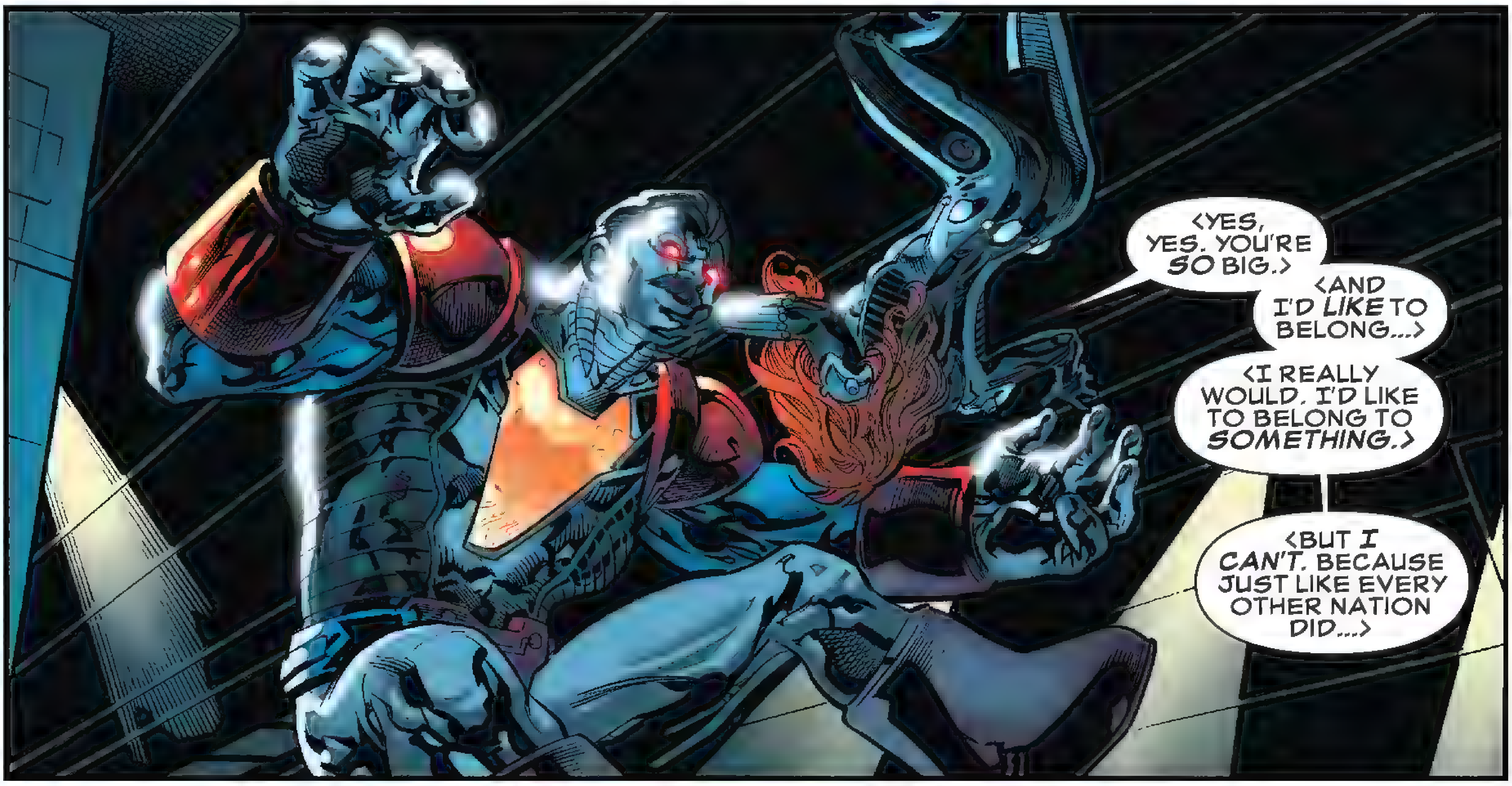
EARLIER THIS YEAR, MOSCOW. ALEXEI SHOSTAKOV. FORMER TEST PILOT. FORMER SOVIET SUPER HERO. FORMER HUSBAND.
<IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.>
<I'M AMAZED YOU WANTED TO MEET. SINCE YOU LEARNED I WAS ALIVE...>
<ALL THAT'S HAPPENED, THESE EXTRAORDINARY LIVES OF OURS....>
<I'M SO *SORRY*, NATALIA.>
<FOR *EVERYTHING.*>
<THAT'S ALL I NEEDED TO HEAR.>
<THOSE OF US WHO TOOK THE SERUM...>
<OUR SHEER *AGE* MAKES US SEE THE WORLD *DIFFERENTLY.*>
<THE BEST WE CAN HOPE FOR IS TO TREAT EACH OTHER GENTLY.>
<NATALIA, IT PLEASES ME TO THINK THAT IN THE DISTANT FUTURE, YOU'LL STILL BE ALIVE.>
<AND YOU'LL STILL BE *EXTRAORDINARY.*>
<HUSH, RED GUARDIAN...>
<HUSH.>

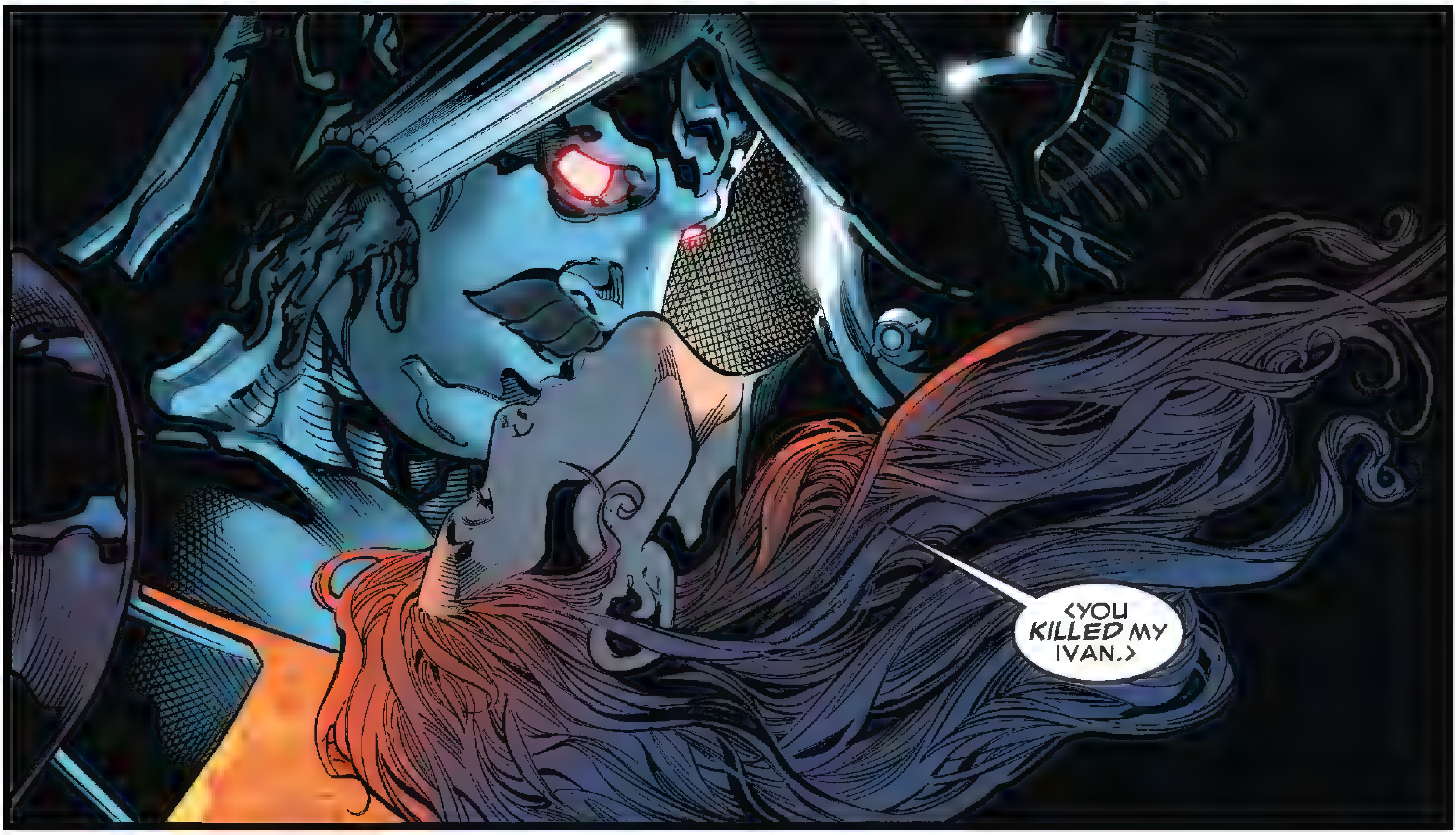
<ALEXEI WAS THE *FIRST* I SAVED FROM YOU SHOWING *NO MERCY.*>
<NOW I'M GOING TO WALK OUT THAT DOOR.>
<I'M BETTING YOU WON'T FLICK YOUR LITTLE SWITCH AND KILL ME.>
<NOT UNTIL I'M *HUMBLED.* NOT WITH ME STILL *DEFYING* YOU.>
<*NATASHA!*>
<DON'T *TEMPT* ME, 'TASHA!>
<I HOLD THE POWER OF LIFE AND *DEATH* OVER YOU! I COULD DO IT SO *EASILY!*>
<NATASHA! PLEASE!>
<*DAMN IT!*>

<SWITCHING OFF THE LIGHTS DOESN'T REALLY MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE TO ME NOW, 'TASHA!>
<IT DOES TO ME.>
<YOU CAN TELL THE *TRUTH* IN THE DARK. IF YOU WANT US TO TALK LIKE OLD FRIENDS, THEN *LET'S.*>
< IVAN, I REALIZED, YEARS AGO...>
<...I FINALLY BECAME *ONE WHOLE PERSON...*>
<...ONLY WHEN YOU *LEFT.*>
<*I'LL MAKE YOU HUMBLE!*>
<*I'LL MAKE YOU BEG!*>
BBBDAAAA
<*MAYBE IF YOU CAN CALM DOWN ENOUGH TO THINK STRAIGHT.*>
<*OOPS. THERE GOES...*>

<...GRAVITY.>
<IVAN, YOU HAVE CHILDREN.>
<SWITCH OFF THE NANITES. WE'LL GET YOU PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT. YOU HAVE MY WORD...>
<AS A PROFESSIONAL.>
ARARRRRGGGG!
BRAKKA-BRAKKA-BRAKKA







<'TASHA... WHAT...?>
<I TOOK A SAMPLE OF YOUR NEW BODY'S NANITES FROM YOUR BRANDY GLASS...>
<IT TOOK THE ONES I'M CARRYING A FEW MINUTES TO HACK IN.>
<I'VE JUST SHUT OFF YOUR ABILITY TO KILL ME. OR TO FIRE YOUR WEAPONS.>
<AND...NOW I HAVE CONTROL OF THE DREADNOUGHT. AND YOUR PERSONAL DEFENSE SHIELDS.>
<SO...>
<THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE.>
<TO SAY SORRY.>
<OR AT LEAST TO CALL ME BY MY REAL NAME.>
GLARRRGGGHH!

BLAM
NUCLEAR WARHEADS...
TWENTY MINUTES TO MASS DETONATION...
AND WHAT THE HELL, AN EVACUATION ALARM...

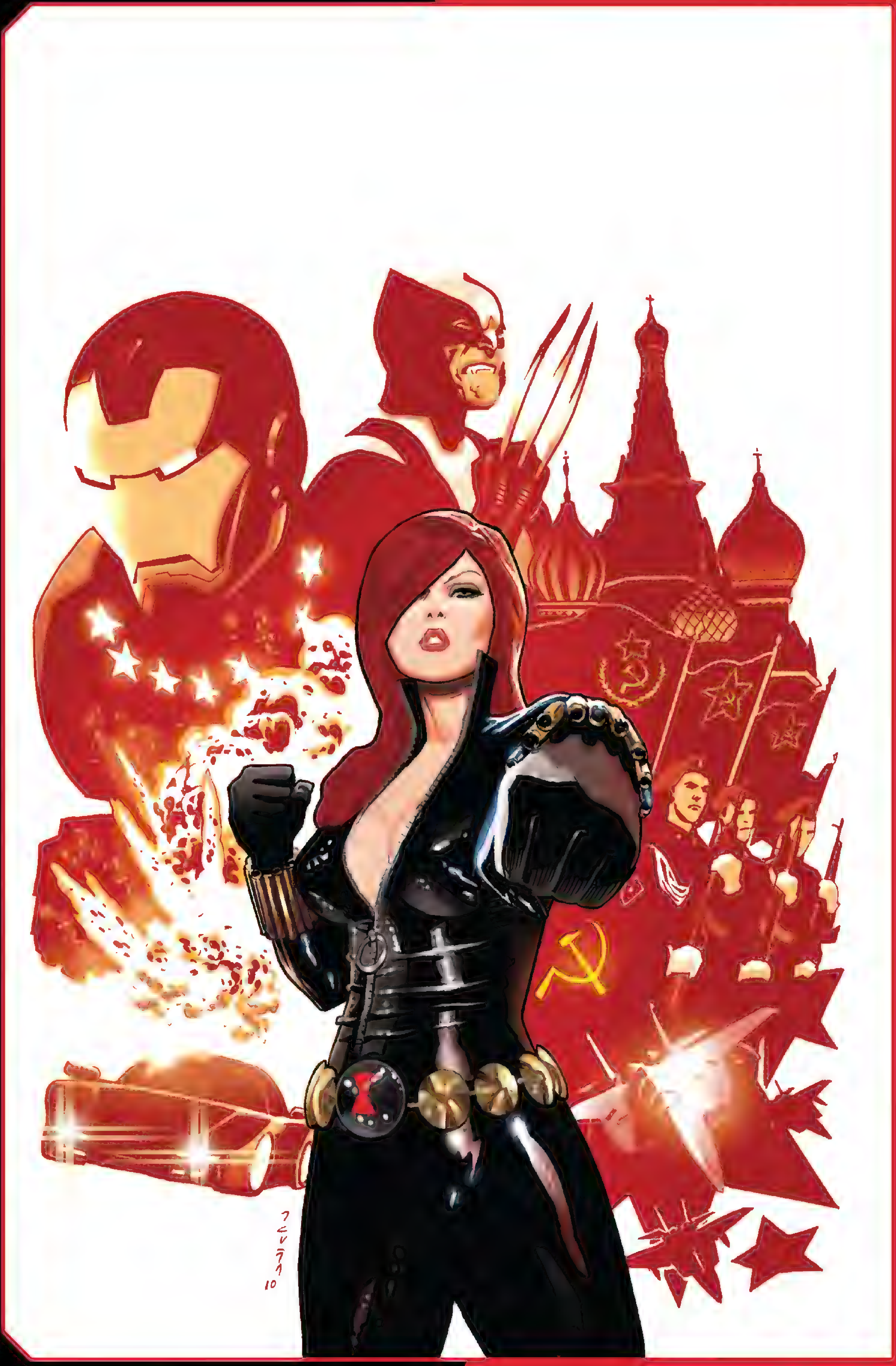
"I FEEL MERCIFUL TODAY."

VODKA. OF *COURSE* THERE IS.
TO IVAN PETROVICH BEZUKHOV...
AS PROMISED-- A *TOAST*.
AND THAT'S ALL.
THE END.

Черная
вдова

BLACK WIDOW #1 VARIANT BY

TRAVEL FOREMAN



BLACK WIDOW 1

“THE NAME OF THE ROSE, PART 1”

THEY CALL HIM THE BLACK ROSE.
SWEET AS, THEY SAY.
ALL THORNS, THEY SAY.
BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT HE GOT THE NAME BECAUSE HE LIKES TO GROW THEM.
ON GRAVES.
HE USED TO BE A SPY. A GOOD ONE. NO ONE LOOKS FOR A BRAIN IN A MAN THAT SIZE. YOU HIRE A MAN LIKE THAT FOR ONE THING ONLY.
MUSCLE. BREAKING HEADS. KILLING.

BUT HE GOT CRAZY.
TOO CRAZY FOR ANYONE TO HIRE.
YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO TRUST A SPY.
♫ I AM A MAN WHO WILL FIGHT FOR YOUR HONOR...♫
♫...I'LL BE THE HERO YOU'RE DREAMING OF...♫

24h
I WAS A SPY.
I WAS TRUSTED.
UNTIL I CHANGED SIDES.
FUNNY HOW THAT HAPPENS.
I GAVE UP ONE COUNTRY FOR ANOTHER. ONE COUNTRY FOR AN IDEAL. I DIDN'T THINK OF IT THAT WAY AT THE TIME.
CALL ME CRAZY.
BUT I JUST WANTED TO BE FREE.

NATASHA.
ALWAYS THE SAME DANCE, WITH US.
YOU NEVER DID STOP FALLING FOR SHADOWS.
AND YOU, NATASHA, STILL GET TOO CLOSE TO YOUR TARGETS.

THWUD
TAK
GRAH!
CHUD
CHUD
CRACK!

BLACK ROSE.
BLACK WIDOW.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.
...LIKEWISE.
OLD FRIENDS. OLD GAME. A HUG OR HANDSHAKE WOULD BE TOO BORING.
YOU BROUGHT AN ICE CHEST.
FOOD, DRINKS.
I'M GOING TO VOMIT.
CHARMER.
NO, I--
HURRK
I SAW THE GRAVEYARD. IT'S GROWN.
THE CITIES IN THIS COUNTRY BURY THEIR POOR, YOU KNOW. THOSE HOMELESS PEOPLE YOU FIND DEAD, EVERY NOW AND THEN--
GO TO HOSPITALS AND UNIVERSITIES FOR CHILDREN TO CUT INTO. OR THEY ARE SENT TO BODY FARMS FOR SCIENTISTS TO EXPERIMENT ON.
BAD ENOUGH THOSE MEN AND WOMEN DIE ALONE.
THEY DESERVE DIGNITY.
WHY DID YOU WANT TO MEET?

THIS.
IT WAS PASSED TO ME. LAST NIGHT.
A ROSE, NATASHA?
YOU'RE THE ONLY ROSE I KNOW. I'M LOOKING FOR REASONS SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE SENT THIS. RUMORS. NAMES. I THOUGHT IT MIGHT MEAN SOMETHING TO YOU.
NOT TO ME.
BUT TO YOU, YES.
TELL ME.
NOTHING TO TELL. JUST A LITTLE MYSTERY.
THOSE ARE THE KIND THAT USUALLY GET SOMEONE KILLED.
OUR KIND, ESPECIALLY.
YOU REMEMBER HOW IT WORKED, BEFORE. OUR EMPLOYERS WANTED WORDS, FACTS. PHOTOGRAPHS. ***HARDWARE.***
NOTHING ELSE MATTERED. THAT WAS HOW THEY SPOKE TO US. IN CASH AND ORDERS.
BUT ALL OF *US*...THEIR EYES AND EARS...HAD A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE FOR EACH OTHER.
MARKS. TAGS. SYMBOLS.

YOU, BLACK WIDOW.
WITH YOUR DEADLIEST BITE.
I'M TOUCHED.
IF ONLY.
I MISS YOUR TOUCH.
I HEAR THINGS ABOUT YOU, NATASHA.
THINGS I WOULD NOT HAVE IMAGINED, ALL THOSE YEARS AGO.
YOU HAVE FRIENDS NOW.
I AM HAPPY FOR THAT.
"AND SCARED FOR YOU, AS WELL."

BLACK ROSE AND I DON'T TALK LONG.
IT'S TOO UNCOMFORTABLE.
1hour pho
WE KNOW THINGS ABOUT EACH OTHER. NOT EVERYTHING, JUST ENOUGH.
pharmacy
pharmacy
BUT I HAVE SOME SECRETS NO ONE SHOULD KNOW.
BEEP BEEP BEEP
HELLO, JAMES. NO, I'M ON MY WAY.
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE STAYED UP.

SORRY. WHAT WAS THAT?
Oh, JUST AN OLD FRIEND. NAME OF ROSE.
YES, LOVELY WOMAN. YOU SHOULD SEE HER GARDEN.
THAP
YOUR GRANDMOTHER, TOO?
YOU'LL HAVE TO TELL ME ABOUT THAT.
RIGHT. I CAN'T WAIT.
KSSSSHHH!

I'LL SEE YOU SOON.
I SURRENDER. TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER.
SPLINK
ARMORED GLOVES.

TWAK
WHO SENT YOU?
HOW... HOW DID YOU KNOW?
ASSUME THE WORST. LIVE ANOTHER DAY.
TCHAK
NOW...WHO SENT YOU TO FOLLOW ME? THE HAND? OLD MOTHER RUSSIA?
SHUK!
AND WHERE DID THEY GET THIS ROSE?
FTTT

I SENT HER.
AND YOU DO *NOT* WANT TO KNOW WHERE I GOT THAT ROSE. OR THE RIBBON.
NATASHA ROMANOVA.
PLEASE LIE DOWN.
SHE'S STILL MOVING.
NATASHA IS VERY STRONG. GIVE THE DRUG FROM THE DART ANOTHER MOMENT.
SMAK!
NO TIME.
I SAID *WAIT.*
WAIT.

WAIT...
NOW. QUICKLY.
CAREFUL.
DO NOT PERFORATE HER STOMACH OR INTESTINES.
I SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT GLOVES.
YOU ARE SAFE. SHE IS UNDISEASED.
I THINK I FOUND IT.
DO *NOT* PULL. CUT THE-- YES. NOW EASE IT OUT. GENTLY.
GOOD. THANK YOU. YOU *ARE* VERY SKILLED, JUST AS THEY SAID.
SLICE

I KNOW YOU CAN HEAR ME, NATASHA. I APOLOGIZE THAT I COULD GIVE YOU NOTHING TO DULL THE PAIN.
BUT PAIN, AS THEY SAY, ALWAYS PASSES.
AND YOU *ARE* VERY STRONG.
COME LOOK FOR ME...
...WHEN YOU CAN.
WEEEOOOOWEEEEOOOOWE
GOD, WHAT IS THIS STUFF? WAS THERE A FIRE?
MAN SAID THE FIGHT WAS RIGHT AROUND--
Oh, DAMN.
SHUT IT. GET THAT AMBULANCE HERE *NOW,* MIKE.
SHE'S ALIVE.
MA'AM?
CAREFUL WHEN YOU LIFT HER.

Oh, GOD. DOCTOR, HER PULSE--
I SEE IT.
YOU, CALL DOWN FOR MORE BLOOD--
JEEZ. I WISH WE KNEW WHAT THEY GAVE HER.
I STILL HAVE ONE MORE SECTION TO EXAMINE FOR DAMAGE.
NATASHA--
EASY, JAMES.
I TALKED TO HER LESS THAN THIRTY MINUTES AGO, TONY. WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?
SHE WAS ATTACKED. THAT'S ALL WE KNOW.
THAT'S ALL YOU KNOW?
TONY STARK, IRON MAN, WITH ALL YOUR RESOURCES--
--AND THAT'S ALL YOU KNOW?
YOU GOING TO BE OKAY IF I LET YOU GO?
COME ON. YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING HERE EXCEPT GET IN THE WAY. AND WE NEED TO TALK.
TALKING ISN'T GOING TO HELP HER, LOGAN. YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE--
STOP. STEP BACK. YOU NEED TO LOOK AT THE BIGGER PICTURE, IF YOU WANT TO HELP HER.

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN? AND WHY ARE YOU HERE AND NOT WITH THE X-MEN?
BUSINESS.
ENOUGH. WE'RE WASTING TIME.
DID SHE SAY ANYTHING TO YOU?
SHE WENT TO VISIT A FRIEND NAMED ROSE. WE SPOKE ABOUT MY GRANDMOTHER. THAT WAS IT.
ROSE?
I CAN HEAR JAMES.
TONY. LOGAN.
MY VOICE WON'T WORK.
THE DOCTORS DON'T KNOW I CAN FEEL EVERYTHING THEY'RE DOING TO ME.
OR THEY KNOW AND DON'T CARE.
CAN'T MIX... DRUGS. UNKNOWN DRUGS AND ANESTHESIA.
BUT THE DRUG IS WEARING OFF.
JUST ENOUGH.
JUST ENOUGH THAT I HAVE TO KEEP MYSELF FROM MOVING WHILE THEY OPERATE.
I THINK WE CAN SEW HER UP.
Oh, GOD.
DID YOU CHECK THAT SHE STILL HAS HER KIDNEYS, LIVER, SPLEEN...
Oh, GOD.
I...YES. I SAW THOSE DURING THE EXAM. NONE HAVE BEEN INJURED.
DON'T MOVE. DON'T MOVE.
NOT...ONE... INCH.

START STITCHING THE UPPER PORTION OF THE INCISION, JUST BELOW THE STERNUM. I'M TAKING ONE MORE LOOK DOWN HERE.
Oh, NO, YOU AREN'T.
Oh, NO, YOU--
HOLD THAT ASIDE FOR ME, WILL YOU?
DAMN YOU. DAMN YOU, AND-- Oh, GOD.
WHOEVER DID THIS WAS CAREFUL.
DON'T MOVE.
DON'TMOVEDON'T MOVEDON'T--
--GETYOURHANDSOUT OFMEDON'TMOVE--
I DON'T GET THIS. IT'S LIKE THEY JUST WANTED TO OPEN HER UP TO SEE WHAT SHE LOOKED LIKE ON THE INSIDE.
--DON'TMOVEORI WILLKILLYOUIWILLKILL YOUIWILLKILLKILLKILL--
I TELL YOU, PEOPLE ARE CRAZY.
BUT SHE'S... SHE'S ONE OF THEM, RIGHT? YOU KNOW, THOSE POWER TYPES?
NO POWERS. NOT THIS ONE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE IS, EXCEPT BLEEDING AND CUT OPEN.
--IWILLSTANDFROM THISTABLEWITHMYGUTS HANGINGOUTANDKILL YOUWITHMYBARE--
OKAY, GUYS. ONE MORE SPOT AND THEN WE'RE--
--HANDSAND DON'TMOVEDON'T MOVEDON'T--

--MOVE.
ONE DAY EARLIER.
THIS IS NICE.
SAY IT LIKE YOU MEAN IT, JAMES.
NICE. REALLY. I DO MEAN IT.
IT'S JUST...
YOU FEEL EXPOSED.
BUT YOU AREN'T, YOU KNOW. PEOPLE SEE A HANDSOME MAN WHEN THEY LOOK AT YOU. AND THAT'S ALL THEY SEE.
NO ONE LOOKS BELOW THE SURFACE. NOT HERE. YOU FIT THE MOLD OF WHAT THEY EXPECT IN A PLACE LIKE THIS, AND THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS TO THEM.
ADVICE FROM ONE SPY TO ANOTHER?
JUST HUMAN BEHAVIOR.
IT'S ALL ABOUT CALCULATING HOW WILLFULLY BLIND A PERSON IS GOING TO BE. AND THEN EXPLOITING THAT.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...

MEN
I LOVE HIGH HEELS. DON'T YOU?
BENJAMIN GAMBOZA. HOT-SHOT ATTORNEY. YOU DRIVE A BMW, ENJOY EGG WHITE OMELETS AT THE CAFÉ IN YOUR BUILDING...
...AND WHEN YOU CALL A HOOKER--AFTER EVERY CASE YOU WIN--YOU PREFER BLONDES. WOMEN WHO DON'T LOOK LIKE YOUR WIFE.
I DON'T--
EXCEPT YOU DON'T BEAT THE HOOKERS.
Ah. YOU SWEET, BRUTAL MAN. NO PROTESTS, PLEASE. I'M VERY PRECISE IN MY RESEARCH.
AND YOUR WIFE HAS CAUGHT MY EYE OVER THE PAST MONTH. WE GO TO THE SAME COFFEE SHOP. I JOG THERE. SHE ALWAYS ARRIVES BY CAB.
I KNOW HOW A WOMAN SHOULD MOVE, BENJAMIN. AND I KNOW HOW A WOMAN MOVES WHEN SHE'S IN PAIN.
I KNOW THAT LOOK IN A WOMAN'S EYE.

DIVORCE HER. GIVE HER A LOT OF MONEY.
OR I'LL COME FOR YOU AGAIN. AND AGAIN.
AND AGAIN.
Remember Natasha
SO. HOW MUCH DID YOU LEAVE OF HIM?
EXCUSE ME?
HIM. THE MAN OVER THERE WHO BEATS HIS WIFE.
I'M NOT BLIND, YOU KNOW.
I THINK I LOVE YOU, JAMES BUCHANAN BARNES.

NOW.
SHE WAS AWAKE THE ENTIRE TIME. FELT EVERYTHING.
WE NEED TO FIND OUT WHO DID THIS.
ON IT.
YOU THAT SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR?
YEAH.
DON'T KNOW IF I LIKE THAT. TONY STARK, PULLING STRINGS WITH JUST A PHONE CALL.
DON'T THINK TOO MUCH. WHAT DID YOU FIND?

NO SIGN OF ANY WEAPON. NO FINGERPRINTS OR DNA.
THIS IS ALL WE FOUND. BESIDES THE OLD WOMAN.
5
2
1
YOU LEFT A CLEAR TRAIL. YOU HAD TO KNOW YOU'D BE EASY TO FIND.
CONVINCE ME WHY I SHOULDN'T KILL YOU.
DEATH IS SUCH A... PRIMITIVE CONCEPT.

I AM NOT ALONE, LOGAN. THERE ARE A HUNDRED LIKE ME, UNDER ORDERS, AND WE WILL NOT STOP COMING.
NOT UNTIL WE GET WHAT WE WANT.
THAT SO.
WHO ARE YOU WORKING FOR?
I THINK YOU KNOW. YOU HAVE WORKED FOR THEM A TIME OR TWO, YOURSELF.
SO LET THIS PLAY OUT. KILL ME, AND IT WILL PLAY OUT ANYWAY. WITH MORE... UNSEEMLY...RESULTS.
SHE'S GOING TO FIND YOU. NATASHA DOESN'T GIVE UP.
I AM COUNTING ON THAT.
DO NOT FORGET TO GIVE HER THE ROSE AND RIBBON.
SHE WILL NEED THEM.

BLACK WIDOW 2

"THE NAME OF THE ROSE, PART 2"

YOU ALWAYS KNEW WHAT YOU HAD TO DO.
NO ONE EVER TOLD YOU.
YOU HAD THE RESOLVE, EVEN THEN.
NOR WERE YOU AFRAID OF THE DARK.
OR WHAT WAITED FOR YOU THERE.
BUT SOMETIMES...
...SOMETIMES...
...I WISH YOU HAD BEEN.

SECURE CODE. ALPHA 31339. BEGIN TRACE.

HEY.
LOGAN.
INTERRUPTING SOMETHING?
MY ESCAPE.
THREE DAYS IN BED. THAT'S WHAT THE DOCTOR SAID.
OR SO I HEARD.
I DON'T THINK SO.
JUST A FLESH WOUND, RIGHT?
BLEEDING STUMPS ARE FLESH WOUNDS.
WHAT I'VE GOT IS A SCRATCH.
NICE.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?
YOUR BOYFRIEND CAPTAIN AMERICA GOT CALLED AWAY. ALL THE AVENGERS DID.
STARK ASKED ME TO BE YOUR... PROTECTION.
TRY NOT TO LAUGH.
DON'T WANT YOU SPLITTING YOUR STITCHES.
I'M SURE YOU--nnh--HAVE BETTER THINGS TO DO.
NOPE.
SOMEONE NEEDS TO KEEP AN EYE ON YOU.
YOU COULD FIND ME CLOTHES.
I'M NO GENTLEMAN.
BUT I BROUGHT YOU SOMETHING.
YOU WENT TO THE PLACE WHERE IT HAPPENED.

DID YOU FIND ANYTHING ELSE?
THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO ASK YOU.
HE KNOWS.
HE KNOWS WHAT WAS TAKEN FROM ME.

IN HIS OWN WAY, HE JUST WARNED ME.
BECAUSE IF *HE* KNOWS...
THEN I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.
I DON'T HAVE *ANY* TIME.
"GENTLEMEN...
"...THANK YOU FOR COMING TO WASHINGTON ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE.
"I'VE CALLED YOU HERE TO ADDRESS ALLEGATIONS OF A SECURITY BREACH.

"ACCUSATIONS.
"BROUGHT TO OUR ATTENTION BY A SOURCE WITHIN THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY.
"ACTING ON THAT INFORMATION, WHICH WE FOUND TO BE SOUND, LEGITIMATE, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, TOO DAMNING NOT TO INVESTIGATE..."
AGENT DOWN. TARGET ON THE MOVE.
"...WE APPROVED A PREEMPTIVE STRIKE, AN EXTRACTION OF SENSITIVE MATERIAL FROM THE BODY OF NATASHA ROMANOVA, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS...
"...THE BLACK WIDOW."
SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE KEPT DRUGGED.
MA'AM. KEEP YOUR HANDS WHERE WE CAN SEE THEM. IF YOU FAIL TO COOPERATE, WE WILL SHOOT TO KILL.

DON'T, PLEASE...I CAN'T EVEN STAND STRAIGHT.
JUST... OH, GOD.
"WHAT'S ALARMING IS HOW THOROUGHLY YOU AND YOUR TEAM WERE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF.
"HAD WE FOUND *NOTHING* TO SUBSTANTIATE THE ALLEGATIONS... WELL, WE WOULDN'T BE SITTING HERE RIGHT NOW."
DON'T HURT ME.
MA'AM, YOU NEED TO FOCUS. SECURE YOURSELF AND WE'LL RETURN YOU TO YOUR ROOM.
DO IT NOW, OR WE'LL SHOOT.
PLEASE.
"BUT WE *DID* RECOVER SOMETHING.
THUD!
WAK!
"SOMETHING RATHER UNFORTUNATE.
"PROOF THAT THE BLACK WIDOW IS ENGAGING IN ACTS OF...ESPIONAGE."

TELL US SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW.
I'D BE MORE WORRIED IF NATASHA *WASN'T* SPYING.
SHE'S SPYING AGAINST ALL OF *YOU,* HAWKEYE.
OUR OPERATIVE RETRIEVED A HIGHLY ADVANCED PIECE OF TECHNOLOGY FROM THE BLACK WIDOW'S BODY. A DATA STORAGE DEVICE THE SIZE OF A PILL, CAPABLE OF WIRELESS UPLOADS--AND DOWNLOADS--OF VAST AMOUNTS OF INFORMATION.
SHE'S BEEN KEEPING TABS ON EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU. AND NOT JUST THE AVENGERS. ***ALL*** SUPER-POWERED INDIVIDUALS.
TRACKING YOUR MOVEMENTS, YOUR BATTLES, YOUR WEAKNESSES. SHE KNOWS YOUR FRIENDS, YOUR FINANCES, EVERY INDISCRETION--EVEN THE COLOR OF YOUR UNDERWEAR.
Oh, PLEASE.
YOU, MR. STARK, DON'T WEAR ANY.
WHATEVER. THIS IS A DISGUSTING ABUSE OF POWER.
NATASHA IS ONE OF ***US.*** SHE'S LOYAL. A FRIEND. SO WHATEVER SHE'S DONE, I'M SURE THERE'S A GOOD--
SHE'S SELLING THE INFORMATION TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER. AND WORSE.
YOU'RE A LIAR.

TELL ME, GENTLEMEN...IS THERE EVEN ONE MAN AMONG YOU WHO THE BLACK WIDOW ***HASN'T*** SEDUCED?
TELL ME THAT HASN'T CLOUDED YOUR JUDGMENT.
YOU LURE A BEE, AFTER ALL, WITH HONEY.
YOU ARE SO FULL OF CRAP.
AND YOU'RE ONE OF NORMAN OSBORN'S OLD CRONIES. I RECOGNIZE YOU. HOW DID YOU KEEP YOUR JOB WHEN THE REST OF THE CROOKED RATS GOT FIRED?
BEEP!
I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT MY PAST ENDORSEMENT OF NORMAN OSBORN WAS... FOOLHARDY, CAPTAIN AMERICA. I DIDN'T HAVE ALL THE FACTS. BUT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER THAT PERHAPS THE SAME IS TRUE FOR THE BLACK WIDOW.

"SHE USED TO BE AN ENEMY OF THE STATE. *YOUR* ENEMY. AND YOU REALLY THINK SHE JUST...TURNED GOOD? NOBLE?"
TONY, IT'S PEPPER.
JUST GOT OUT OF THAT MEETING.
"SHE'S A FORMER RUSSIAN SPY. THE VERY BEST THAT PROGRAM EVER PRODUCED."
WONDERING IF YOU'RE IN TOWN FOR LUNCH.
"MY EXPERTS CALL HER THE MOST DANGEROUS WOMAN IN THE WORLD.
"THE BLACK WIDOW. RUNNING CIRCLES AROUND MEN AND WOMEN WHO POSSESS TEN TIMES HER STRENGTH. SHE LED THE AVENGERS, FOR GOD'S SAKE-- WITHOUT SUPER-POWERS."
PEPPER?

THERE ARE SOME THINGS A SUIT LIKE YOU WON'T EVER UNDERSTAND.
LIKE TRUST. TRUST IN BATTLE. TRUST WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN. THE KIND OF TRUST THAT LETS YOU PUT YOUR LIFE IN ANOTHER PERSON'S HANDS.
A PERSON LIKE NATASHA.
YOUR PITCH NEEDS WORK. AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THESE ARE ALL *POSITIVES*.
PEPPER? ARE YOU THERE? PEPPER--
WHAT?
WHO IS THIS? WHERE'S THE WOMAN WHO WAS--
...
N-NO. I'LL...I'LL BE RIGHT THERE. JUST...KEEP HER ALIVE.
WHAT HAPPENED?
PEPPER WAS ATTACKED. FOCUSED SOUND RIFLE KNOCKED HER OUT. I-I'VE GOT TO GO.
STARK.
YEAH?
MS. POTTS' NAME COMES UP IN NATASHA'S FILES. AS THE BEST WAY TO GET TO YOU.

24H BEER
1891

YOU MUST ALWAYS HAVE A SAFE PLACE TO GO.
THAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU LEARN.
THOUGH YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT BY INSTINCT, BEFORE ANYONE HAS TO TEACH YOU.
IT ISN'T JUST SPIES THAT NEED TO RUN.
GOOD TIMES DON'T LAST FOREVER.
I HAVE THREE OF THESE ROOMS IN THE CITY. THE BUILDING OWNERS, ALL RUSSIAN AND OLD, OWE ME THEIR LIVES. THEY REMEMBER WHAT IT MEANS TO HONOR DEBTS.

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THIS WOULD HAPPEN.
BUT I GOT HAPPY, AND SOFT.
I FORGOT THAT SECRETS NEVER KEEP.
SO.
LET'S ASSUME THE GOVERNMENT KNOWS ABOUT THE DATA CHIP. MY PLAN B.
LET'S ASSUME, TOO, THAT THE CHIP IS THE **ONLY** REASON THEY'RE AFTER ME, AND THAT THEY DON'T KNOW ABOUT ALL THE OTHER... **QUESTIONABLE** THINGS I'VE DONE.

THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT DISCOVER THIS ON THEIR OWN.
WHO TOLD THEM?
AND WHY? ANY NUMBER OF PEOPLE WOULD KILL FOR THE DATA I'VE COLLECTED.
IT'S WORTH MILLIONS, MAYBE BILLIONS, ON THE BLACK MARKET.
THAT'S THE KIND OF THING YOU KEEP A SECRET, WHEN YOU FIND IT.
UNLESS THIS IS PERSONAL.
AND IT IS.
FIRST THE ROSE, THEN THE DATA CHIP.
TWO OF MY BEST-KEPT SECRETS. NO ONE SHOULD HAVE FOUND OUT ABOUT THEM.
EVERYONE WHO KNEW THEY EXISTED IS DEAD.

THE F.B.I. RELEASED THIS PHOTO TODAY OF NATASHA ROMANOVA, SAID TO BE WANTED IN NUMEROUS TERROR INVESTIGATIONS. THE AGENCY HAS OFFERED A ONE-MILLION-DOLLAR REWARD FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO HER ARREST.
SHE IS CONSIDERED TO BE HIGHLY DANGEROUS, AND THE F.B.I. WARNS CITIZENS NOT TO APPROACH. IF YOU SEE THIS WOMAN, CALL THE NUMBER AT THE BOTTOM OF YOUR SCREEN.
SO PREDICTABLE. LIKE CLOCKWORK.
THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT MY CONCERN.
THEY ARE BEING USED.
I WANT THE PERSON, OR GROUP, PULLING THE STRINGS.
I WANT TO KNOW WHY. WHY NOW?
WHY THE ROSE?
CHAKT!
I HAVE HUNTED FOR LESS.
I HAVE KILLED FOR LESS.
BUT NEVER WITH AS MUCH PLEASURE.

UPPER MANHATTAN.
LOGAN. YOU'RE IN MY APARTMENT.
JAMES. HOW WAS YOUR MEETING?
YOU KNEW. THEY TOLD US YOU KNEW.
HOW COULD YOU LET THAT HAPPEN TO HER?

HOW'S PEPPER?
SHE'LL LIVE.
I THINK TONY... CLINT...THEY HAVE THEIR DOUBTS NOW ABOUT 'TASHA. THEY HAVEN'T SAID IT OUT LOUD, BUT THEY DO.
SURE.
YOU LET HER GO. FROM THE HOSPITAL.
I DIDN'T KNOW *ANYTHING.*
I'VE DONE SOME DIGGING, THOUGH.
GOT TOLD THE SAME THING YOU DID. FOLKS THINK SHE WAS SPYING AGAINST THE COUNTRY.
HELL, I'VE BEEN ACCUSED OF THE SAME THING, TIME OR TWO.
YOU DON'T THINK SHE'S GUILTY.
WE'RE ALL GUILTY OF SOMETHING.
BUT SHE WOULDN'T HIRE ANYONE TO SHOOT PEPPER. BLACK WIDOW WANTS YOU DEAD, OR HURTING, SHE DOES IT HERSELF.
SOMEONE IS GUNNING FOR HER, JAMES.

"OTHERS WILL BE COMING, TOO."
I'M CLOSE.
"THE SHARKS WILL SMELL BLOOD IN THE WATER.
"OLD ENEMIES. OR SOME NEW KID ON THE BLOCK WHO'LL THINK THIS IS THE TIME TO MAKE A NAME.
"SHE NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO FACE THEM. ON HER OWN TERMS. NOT IN A HOSPITAL BED.
"THE BLACK WIDOW IS A LEGEND."
...
I KNOW YOU'RE THERE. DON'T WASTE MY TIME HIDING.
"SOME FOLKS THINK YOU KILL A LEGEND, YOU'LL BECOME ONE, TOO.
"BUT THAT'S NOT HOW IT WORKS.
"LEGENDS AREN'T MADE SO CHEAP."

HELLO, NATASHA.
WE NEED TO TALK.
"AND LEGENDS ALWAYS DIE HARD."

BLACK WIDOW 3

“THE NAME OF THE ROSE, PART 3”

NATASHA.
WE NEED TO TALK.
THERE ARE WOLVES IN THE NIGHT.
THE SOLDIERS WOULD SAY THAT, WHEN I WAS A GIRL.
MY UNCLES AND BROTHERS, IN WAR. MY FRIENDS. RAISING ME ON THE BATTLEFIELD BECAUSE THERE WAS NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.
IS THAT ALL, ELEKTRA?
THERE ARE WOLVES, THEY WOULD SAY.
BECAUSE THERE'S A LOOK IN YOUR EYE.
AND THERE ARE STORIES ABOUT WOLVES AND GIRLS.
GIRLS IN RED.
ALL ALONE IN THE WOODS.

ABOUT TO GET EATEN UP.
ELEKTRA.
TELL ME WHAT BIG EYES I HAVE.

YOU HAVE BEEN SPYING, NATASHA.
I HEAR THIS, EVERYWHERE. I HEAR OTHER THINGS.
AND?
YOU HAVE BEEN SPYING ON *ME.*
IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER, YOU'RE NOT THAT INTERESTING.
AND I DON'T HAVE TIME TO PLAY.

BLAM
CLANK
SHOW-OFF.

"WHY, NATASHA?
BLAM
"WHEN SO MANY TRUST YOU?"
"AS IF YOU NEED TO ASK.
"YOU AND I BOTH KNOW THAT ANY OF US CAN BE TURNED.
"HOW MANY TIMES HAS IT ALREADY HAPPENED? ONE OF US, GOING BAD?
"AGAINST OUR WILL? BY CHOICE?
"HOW MANY FRIENDS HAVE BETRAYED US, ELEKTRA? HOW MANY DOES IT TAKE, BEFORE WE START ARMING OURSELVES WITH KNOWLEDGE?
"TELL ME I WAS WRONG."
"TELL ME YOU WOULDN'T DO THE SAME THING.
"TELL ME YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY."

THEY SAY YOU HAVE SOLD THE INFORMATION YOU GATHERED.
THEY SAY YOU CONSPIRE TO HARM YOUR ALLIES AND FRIENDS.
THAT IS A LIE.
MY LIFE HAS BEEN STOLEN FROM ME, TIME AND TIME AGAIN.
I WILL NOT LET IT HAPPEN ONCE MORE.
NEITHER WILL I.

FIX THIS.
WOLVES AND GIRLS.
BOTH HAVE SHARP TEETH.

ALWAYS, TOO CLOSE.
MUCH TOO CLOSE, NATASHA.
MOTHER HEN.
YOU *NEED* A MOTHER.

I ASSUME YOU ARRANGED FOR DISCRETION?
THE BEST MONEY CAN BUY.
NO ONE HERE IS INTERESTED IN TROUBLE.
WITH YOU, BLACK ROSE, NO ONE-- ≶NNH≶ --USUALLY IS.
LIE DOWN.
REST, NATASHA.
REST YOUR HEART.
THIS WILL NOT LAST.
NOTHING EVER DOES.
NOTH

I OUTLIVED ALL THE MEN WHO RAISED ME.
THANK YOU.
I STAYED YOUNG WHILE THEY FADED, AND DIED FROM BULLETS AND DISEASE, OR OLD AGE.
NO NEED. YOU ARE ONE OF THE LAST WHO KNOW ME, NATASHA.
THAT IS A STRANGE BOND.
YES, IT IS.
YOU FORGET SO MUCH.
YOU FORGET THEM.
FRIENDS. FAMILY.
YOU PUT ASIDE WHAT CAN'T BE CHANGED.
HAVE YOU ANSWERED THIS RIDDLE YET? THE MYSTERY OF THE ROSE?
LIKE DEATH.
I KNOW THE ANSWER. I KNOW WHAT THE ROSE IS. I KNOW WHAT THE RIBBON WAS. I KNOW IT ALL.
UNTIL SOMETHING SMALL AND UNEXPECTED CATCHES YOU.
BUT NOT WHY. WHY NOW, EXCEPT FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN TO UNSETTLE ME.
A POWER PLAY. PROOF THAT I'M VULNERABLE IN WAYS THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH FLESH AND BLOOD.
THE ATTACK ON ME WAS MORE OF THE SAME.
A WAY TO ISOLATE AND UNBALANCE ME.
MIND GAMES.
ALWAYS, GAMES.
NATASHA. WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH? WILL YOU CLEAR YOUR NAME? LEAVE THESE SO-CALLED FRIENDS AND RETURN TO THE OLD LIFE OF DEALS AND SHADOWS?
YOU KNOW WHAT I'LL DO.
YES...
...IT IS PERSONAL NOW.

LONDON, ENGLAND.
Duke of York
DUKE OF YORK
the

COME WITH ME.
NOW.
REALLY? OUT HERE? I'VE GOT...I MEAN, I LIVE RIGHT ABOVE THE...THE...YOU KNOW. *BAR.* BUT ONLY IF YOU'RE STILL INTERESTED BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO PRESSURE YOU OR ANYTHING, THOUGH GOD, *GOD,* YOU'RE *SO* BEAUTIFUL--
WELL, HELLO.
YOU'RE *EARLY.* I WASN'T *DONE* WITH HIM.
YOU CAN HAVE HIM WHEN I'M FINISHED. I PROMISE TO LEAVE YOU ALL THE IMPORTANT PARTS.
YOU BETTER. HE'S CUTE.
HE TASTES SWEET, TOO.
I LIKE THE SWEET ONES. THEY ALWAYS FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS.

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHO ARE YOU?
AN ASSOCIATE OF YOUR FATHER'S, NED. HE MIGHT HAVE MENTIONED ME ONCE OR TWICE BEFORE HIS DEATH.
I'M THE WIDOW, IF THAT HELPS.
Oh. DAMN.
YES. *THAT* ONE.
ARE YOU GOING TO KILL ME?
MAYBE.
Oh, GOD.
I'M SORRY. I'M SO SORRY.
SO AM I.
I LIKED YOUR FATHER.
LET'S GO IN. I HAVE QUESTIONS.
HE USED TO CALL YOU CRAZY.
CRAZY. DANGEROUS.
SWEET MAN, YOUR FATHER. HE KNEW ME WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, IN RUSSIA. ONE OF THOSE FACELESS, NAMELESS GENIUSES WHO KEPT THE GOVERNMENT MACHINE RUNNING.
THE KIND WHO NEVER GET CREDIT FOR ANYTHING. THE KIND NO ONE REMEMBERS AFTER THEY'RE DEAD.
LIKE YOU WON'T BE REMEMBERED.
DON'T. D-DON'T TALK ABOUT HIM LIKE THAT.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
LET'S STICK TO BUSINESS.
MY BUSINESS.
YOU, IN MY BUSINESS.
YOUR FATHER AND I WORKED TOGETHER. THERE WERE SEVERAL PROJECTS. ONE WAS PERSONAL.
HE PROMISED ABSOLUTE SECRECY.
I THINK, NOW, HE LIED ABOUT THAT.

I BELIEVE HE TOLD *YOU.* HIS ONLY CHILD.
AND THEN *YOU* SOLD ME OUT.
THUD
OH, GOD. DON'T KILL ME.
THEN TELL ME A STORY, NED.
TELL ME A TRUE STORY.
QUICK. BEFORE I GET BORED.
PLEASE...YOU AND I NEVER MET. THERE WAS NO PROMISE BETWEEN US. I DIDN'T THINK WHAT I DID WAS WRONG.
WHAT DID YOU DO?
A MAN CAME TO VISIT. HE OFFERED TO BUY ME THIS PLACE, GIVE ME A HUGE AMOUNT OF MONEY...IF I WORKED FOR HIM.
HE'D HEARD ABOUT MY FATHER, KNEW I HAD SKILLS WITH...WITH COMPUTERS. ADVANCED CYBERNETICS.
I SAID YES. YES, OF COURSE. I NEEDED CASH. A PLACE TO LIVE.
HE SPENT A LOT OF TIME HERE, AFTERWARDS. I LET HIM LOOK AT MY FATHER'S PAPERS. I FIGURED HE PAID FOR THEM, RIGHT? HE SAW THINGS IN THEM. ASKED QUESTIONS.
QUESTIONS.
ABOUT THE WIRELESS DATA STORAGE UNIT MY FATHER MADE FOR YOU. THE ONE HE...HE SURGICALLY PLACED INSIDE YOU.
THE MAN WHO HIRED ME WAS SMART. HE FIGURED OUT A LOT ON HIS OWN.
TELL ME HIS NAME.
SUMI.
FAKE, I BET. LIKE, IT WAS A TWIST ON SUMO, RIGHT? BECAUSE HE WAS REAL BIG. HUGE. *GIANT.* STRONG. NO FAT, JUST MUSCLE. A FIGHTER.
WHAT WERE YOU BUILDING FOR HIM?

IT WAS ANOTHER DATA UNIT, BASED ON MY FATHER'S RESEARCH INTO CYBERNETICS AND... AND THE HUMAN BRAIN.
MEMORIES. THE MAN WANTED TO FIND A WAY TO SEE HUMAN MEMORIES. LIKE...LIKE YOU DOWNLOAD THE BRAIN AND THEN WATCH AN ENTIRE LIFE PLAY OUT ON A MONITOR, OR SOMETHING.
BUT THE RESULTS WERE *TERRIBLE.* THE MIND IS TOO COMPLEX.
AND THEN IT GOT WEIRD BECAUSE THERE WAS SOME MAN'S BRAIN HE'D FROZEN THAT HE KEPT WANTING ME TO...TO ACCESS. I TOLD HIM IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE.
HE DIDN'T BELIEVE ME. I THINK HE TOOK MY RESEARCH SOMEWHERE ELSE. I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM IN SEVERAL MONTHS.
TRAGIC.
DID YOU GET A NAME FOR THE BRAIN?
WHAT?
NEVER MIND.
BLAM
OhGOD OhGODOh GOD--
MOVE!
BEEP!
BEEEEEP!

NATASHA ROMANOVA.
SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
MORE OR LESS INTACT.
KOFF
KOFF
SUMI, I PRESUME?
ONE INCARNATION OF HIM, I SUPPOSE.

I'M HERE TO SEE HOW YOU PLAY WITH OTHERS.
THUD!
I BROUGHT YOU PLAYMATES.
PRETTY NATASHA.
PUNY LITTLE NATASHA.
YOU REMEMBER ME, YES? I DO NOT SEE HOW YOU COULD FORGET. WE WERE IN THE BALLET TOGETHER, IN MOSCOW. BUT YOU WERE TAKEN AWAY, RECRUITED...AND THEN, SO WAS I.
NINOTCHKA.
KOFF
BORIS.
THE K.G.B. LOVED ITS DANCERS, DID IT NOT?
YOU ALWAYS TALKED MORE THAN YOU DANCED.
YOU'VE FORGOTTEN WHAT I CAN DO.
YOU CAN'T TOUCH ME, NATASHA.
I DON'T NEED TO.

CRACK
WHIP

SPIT!
YOU ALWAYS DID HAVE A WEAKNESS FOR MEN.
LET HIM GO.
Nuh--
OOPS.
MY KNIFE SLIPPED.
SCHLK

WAP!
I THINK I HURT YOU.
POOR BLACK WIDOW. WITH PAIN IN HER EYES.
Nnnngh...
BORIS, THE FIRE--
CRAK!

Nnk--!
BLAM
SURPRISE.
I'VE GOT MORE OF THESE BODIES JUST WAITING TO BE CONTROLLED. YOUNG NED GAVE ME A BETTER GIFT THAN HE REALIZED. SUCH A NICE DESIGN.
WHO ARE YOU REALLY?
AN ADMIRER.
YOU'LL FIGURE IT OUT. JUST FOLLOW THE ROSE.
AFTER ALL...
...THAT'S HOW I FOUND YOUR BABY.

BLACK WIDOW 4

“THE NAME OF THE ROSE, PART 4”

RUSSIA. A LIFETIME AGO.
WE ALL BURN.
WE BURN IN FIRE.
COME ON! HURRY!
THEY'RE COMING!
WE BURN IN BLOOD.
GET TO THE TREES!
AAH!
WE BURN IN DREAMS.
RUN! RUN, YOU BASTARDS!
AND IT NEVER ENDS.

NIKOLAI, I NEED YOU AT YOUR GUN. NOW.
WAIT A MOMENT.
THE **GERMANS** ARE NOT WAITING, YOU IDIOT. AND VASILII WOULD **KILL** YOU FOR ROBBING HIM.
AT LEAST I WAITED UNTIL HE DIED. HE WOULDN'T HAVE DONE THE SAME FOR ME.
CHAK!
DREAMS NEVER END.
NIKOLAI.
DON'T. VASILII... HE WOULD UNDERSTAND.
YOU WOULD NOT WANT THEM TO.
HE KNOWS HOW IMPORTANT THIS IS.
NOT IF IT MEANS FORGETTING.
YOU CAN NEVER FORGET.
WHAT COULD BE THAT IMPORTANT?
FOOD.
YOU NEED TO EAT.
VASILII WAS SAVING SOME OF HIS RATIONS FOR YOU. HE TOLD ME.
YOU, WHO ARE ALL THAT IS LEFT.

SO, REMEMBER: WE ARE BORN IN FIRE.
NO. WE SHOULD...WE SHOULD SHARE WHAT'S HERE WITH THE OTHERS--
NATASHA.
AGAIN, AND AGAIN.
NATASHA.
IF THE OTHERS KNEW WHAT YOU'VE BEEN HIDING, THEY WOULD NOT TAKE THE FOOD. THEY WOULD GIVE YOU THEIRS, JUST AS VASILII WANTED TO DO.
YOU WOULD LIVE IT ALL, AGAIN.
AND THEN THEY WOULD SHOOT ME FOR BEING SO CARELESS WITH YOU.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH IT HURTS.
VASILII WAS A GOOD FRIEND.
SO ARE YOU.
BECAUSE I LOVE YOU.
WHEN IT HURTS, YOU KNOW YOU ARE ALIVE.
BOTH OF YOU.
THEY'RE COMING! GET READY!
AND YOU KNOW THAT AS LONG AS YOU LIVE, THEY LIVE.
WHATEVER HAPPENS--
--I LOVE YOU, TOO.
AND WHEN YOU DIE, THEY DIE.

YOU ARE THE INHERITOR OF MEMORIES.
PRESENT DAY. TGV 6176.
YOU KNOW, THERE ARE DAYS WHEN I TELL MYSELF THAT I SHOULD JUST...STOP.
STOP ALL THE MURDER AND LYING, ALL THE DIRTY, DIRTY THINGS I DO FOR A CHEAP BUCK, AND JUST...PRACTICE LAW FULL TIME.
BUT THEN, I'D MISS THE PEOPLE.
HELLO, MAKI.
LADY BULLSEYE.
I APPRECIATE YOU COMING ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE.
YOU SHOULD THANK ME FOR NOT SHOOTING YOU IN THE HEAD, NATASHA. YOU GAVE ME MORE THAN A FEW OPPORTUNITIES AT THE TRAIN STATION IN PARIS.
DID I?
YOU AND I BOTH KNOW HOW PREDICTABLE YOU ARE. CURIOSITY ALWAYS TRUMPS THE KILL, WITH YOU.
AND YOU.

I LIKE TO LIVE DANGEROUSLY.
WHILE YOU...YOU JUST LIKE HURTING OTHERS FROM A DISTANCE.
I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED IF THAT MAKES YOU A COWARD.
IF THIS IS ABOUT PEPPER--
FORGET PEPPER. SHE'LL LIVE.
I WANT TO KNOW WHO HIRED YOU TO SHOOT HER.
APPARENTLY THAT WAS YOU, NATASHA.
YOU'RE AN EVIL MASTERMIND. OR SO I HEAR.
WELL.
EVIL ENOUGH.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING, MAKI?
NEVER BETTER.
GOOD.
WE CAN FINISH THIS, THEN.
ANY TIME, NATASHA. THINK OF THE FUN WE COULD HAVE ON THIS TRAIN.

SURE.
FUN.
YOU SOUND BORED BY THE IDEA.
YOU'RE A BABY COMPARED TO ME. OF COURSE I'M BORED. I KNOW HOW THIS WILL END.
YOU ONLY CAME HERE FOR THE FEDERAL BOUNTY ON MY HEAD. YOU THINK WE'LL TALK. YOU THINK YOU'LL GET THE UPPER HAND. YOU THINK IT WILL BE EASY, WITH ALL THESE... INNOCENT PEOPLE AROUND TO USE AS HOSTAGES AGAINST ME.
TELL ME WHO HIRED YOU, MAKI. I KNOW IT WASN'T KINGPIN. HE WOULDN'T BE STUPID ENOUGH TO DRAW MY ATTENTION.
IF YOU THINK I'LL SAY--
HOW ARE YOU FEELING NOW?
WHY DO YOU KEEP ASKING ME THAT?
MAKI.
BE A GOOD GIRL.
TELL ME WHO HIRED YOU...
...AND I *MIGHT* JUST GIVE YOU THE ANTIDOTE.
ANTIDOTE?
THERE'S NO WAY I'VE BEEN POISONED. YOU NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY.
THERE'S ALWAYS AN OPPORTUNITY.
ALL IT TAKES IS A MOMENT.
A TOUCH.
YOU NEVER FELT ME.
YOU ARE SO FULL OF--
--CRAP.

PARALYSIS IS JUST THE FIRST SYMPTOM.
YOU'LL STOP BREATHING IN ONE MINUTE.
OOPS.
GIVE ME A NAME, MAKI.
QUICK, OR I WON'T HAVE TIME TO--
SUMI.
HE SAID YOU'D... CONTACT ME.
NOW WHO'S... PREDICTABLE?
FUNNY. DID HE GIVE YOU A MESSAGE?
HE SAID YOU...ALREADY GOT IT.
NOW... GIVE...ME...
URK
YES. I GOT THE MESSAGE.
YOU KNOW, I LIED. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SUFFOCATE. NOT FROM THE POISON, ANYWAY.
BUT THANKS TO THE PARALYTIC WORKING ITS WAY THROUGH YOUR BODY, EVERYONE IS GOING TO *THINK* YOU'RE DEAD.
LONG ENOUGH FOR YOU TO BE BURIED.
AND I *WILL* MAKE SURE YOU'RE BURIED, MAKI.
NICE AND DEEP. UNMARKED GRAVE.

SCREAM ALL YOU LIKE ON THE INSIDE. FIGHT TO MOVE. PRAY.
YOU'RE IN *MY* PRISON NOW, MAKI.
REMEMBER THAT, THE NEXT TIME YOU COME AFTER MY FRIENDS, AND THEIR FAMILIES.
KILLING PEOPLE IS EASY.
MAKING THEM SUFFER IS AN ART.
CLAP!
WC
WC

JAMES. YOU FOUND ME.
YOU CAN'T BE SURPRISED.
WE'RE BOTH MADE OF SIMILAR STUFF.
I JUST HIDE IT BETTER THAN YOU DO.
WHAT'S GOING ON, NATASHA?
I'M SURE YOU'VE HAD AN EARFUL.
THAT, AND MORE.
I'M NOT SURPRISED YOU'VE BEEN KEEPING TABS ON EVERYONE. AND I KNOW YOU'RE NOT SELLING US OUT.
IS THAT WHAT THE OTHERS THINK?
I DON'T KNOW. YES. MAYBE. DOES IT MATTER?
NO.
'TASHA.
I DON'T KNOW WHO'S DOING THIS. OR WHY. THAT'S THE TRUTH.
BUT NOT THE WHOLE TRUTH, I BET.
AND IF I OFFERED MYSELF UP WOULD YOU TAKE MY HELP?
JAMES--
I KNOW YOU DON'T NEED ME. BUT PLEASE, NATASHA.
WHATEVER ELSE WE ARE... LET ME BE YOUR FRIEND.
YOU'RE A GOOD MAN.
NOT REALLY, NO.
BUT YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS THAT.

POLIZEI
POLIZEI
POLIZEI
POLIZEI
A LOT OF POLICE AROUND.
SOMETHING ELSE I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT?
DARLING.
SWEETHEART.
ABSOLUTELY NOT.
RIGHT.
THAT DOESN'T SCARE ME AT ALL.
I NEED TO GO.
I KNOW.
IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND--
--I WON'T. I'LL GET IT DONE. NO MATTER HOW MUCH I DISLIKE IT.

NEAR DOBROČSKÝ FOREST, SLOVAKIA.
WROOO
WROOOOOM

Oh.
NATASHA.
BLACK ROSE.
I SAW YOUR CAMP. I WAS... WORRIED.
THERE WERE WOLVES.
WOLVES.
I'M OLD, BUT NOT BLIND.
I GREW UP DURING THE WAR. I KNOW WHEN A MAN IS HIDING IN THE WOODS. WE FETCHED HIM DOWN.
THANK YOU FOR SENDING HIM TO PROTECT US, NATASHA ***ROMANOVA.***
MY MOTHER ALWAYS SAID YOU MIGHT BE BACK.
BUT I DID NOT EXPECT THAT YOU WOULD LOOK THE SAME AS YOU DID WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL.
YOUR EYES ARE OLDER, THOUGH. YOUR GAZE. I SUPPOSE THAT'S SOME CONSOLATION.
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T RETURN AFTER YOUR MOTHER DIED. I... COULDN'T.
ANYA. SOME TEA FOR OUR GUEST, PLEASE.
THANK YOU.
ANYA IS MY YOUNGEST DAUGHTER.
AND LITTLE ROSE--

--IS MY GRAND-DAUGHTER.
NOT A COMMON NAME, HERE.
I HEARD IT, ONCE. LONG AGO.
FROM YOU.
I WILL GO KEEP WATCH.
ANYA, GO WITH HIM. LEAVE BABY ROSE WITH ME.
I THINK YOU SHOULD HOLD HER, NATASHA.
NO.
COWARD.
MAYBE I AM.
BUT I'M HERE BECAUSE SOMEONE FOUND OUT.
I DON'T KNOW WHO. OR HOW.
I DIDN'T EVEN THINK *YOU* KNEW ***THE TRUTH,*** BUT THE FACT YOUR DAUGHTER CALLED THIS BABY ***ROSE***--
MY MOTHER TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU. I WANTED TO KNOW WHY YOU KEPT RETURNING, WHY YOU WOULD DISAPPEAR FOR DAYS INTO THE FOREST WITH NOTHING BUT THE CLOTHES ON YOUR BACK.
BUT I NEVER REPEATED WHAT SHE TOLD ME.
I WAS HOPING YOU'D SAY SOMETHING DIFFERENT.
IT WOULD BE ONE MYSTERY SOLVED.
Oh, MY.
SO YOU KNOW THIS, TOO.
HOW COULD I NOT? I REMEMBER EVERYTHING.
I'M SURPRISED YOU...DUG IT UP.
I DIDN'T. SOMEONE ELSE FOUND IT. THE SAME PERSON WHO IS TRYING TO RUIN ME, AND HURT MY FRIENDS.
I'M AFRAID HE'LL COME AFTER YOU.
YOU LIVE A ROUGH LIFE.
MY MOTHER HOPED THAT WOULD NOT ALWAYS BE THE CASE.
SHE LIKED YOU. SHE WAS ALWAYS SORRY FOR WHAT HAPPENED THAT NIGHT.

ARE YOU CERTAIN SHE TOLD NO ONE?
WHO DID *YOU* TELL?
ONLY IVAN. HE WAS THE MAN WHO RAISED ME. BUT HE WAS NOT WITH MY UNIT WHEN... EVERYTHING WENT WRONG.
EVERYTHING WAS WRONG IN THOSE DAYS. SOMETIMES I CANNOT BELIEVE THE WORLD CONTINUED AFTER THAT WAR.
I REMEMBER IVAN. HE VISITED US. DID YOU KNOW THAT? HE WANTED TO THANK MY MOTHER FOR ALL SHE DID FOR YOU.
HE AGED LIKE YOU, TOO. NEVER GROWING OLDER.
HE'S DEAD NOW.
I'M SURE IT WAS TIME.
HOLD OUT YOUR HAND.
WHY? IT'S IN THE PAST.
I WAS FORCED TO SELL MY WEDDING RING, AND IF COULD HOLD IT AGAIN, EVEN FOR A MOMENT...I WOULD. JUST TO REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS TO BE YOUNG.
I SUSPECT THAT IS SOMETHING YOU COULD STAND TO REMEMBER, AS WELL.
HIS NAME WAS NIKOLAI. THE RIBBON BELONGED TO HIS MOTHER. SHE HAD...SEWN IT INTO HIS SHIRT SO THAT HE WOULD HAVE SOMETHING OF HERS NEAR HIS HEART.
THERE WAS NO PRIEST. JUST US... SAYING WE LOVED EACH OTHER.
THIS WAS THE ONLY RING HE COULD GIVE ME.
WE WERE VERY YOUNG. I WAS HARDLY SIXTEEN. HE WAS SEVENTEEN.
IT WAS GOOD WE HAD EACH OTHER, EVEN FOR A SHORT TIME.
DO YOU RECALL WHAT I SAID TO YOU ALL THOSE YEARS AGO, WHEN I WAS A CHILD?
YOU WANTED TO KNOW IF I'D HURT MY FINGER. IF THAT WAS WHY I HAD SILK RIBBON WRAPPED AROUND IT.
YOU TOLD ME YES, YOU WERE HURT. THAT A LITTLE PIECE OF RIBBON WAS HOLDING YOU TOGETHER.
IT WAS YEARS BEFORE I UNDERSTOOD WHAT YOU MEANT.
AND NOW, SOMEONE IS TRYING TO USE THE DEAD AGAINST YOU?

NOT JUST THE DEAD.
THAT IS SHAMEFUL.
AND ARROGANT.
HE WANTS ME TO FIND HIM.
HE SAID TO FOLLOW THE ROSE.
THE ROSE, HE SAID, WAS HOW HE FOUND...
...NEVER MIND.
YOU'RE LEAVING ALREADY?
I ONLY CAME TO MAKE CERTAIN YOU AND YOUR FAMILY WERE SAFE.
THE MAN YOU SENT HAS ONE OF THOSE...CELL PHONES. YOU COULD HAVE CALLED.
SILLY ME.
STAY.
YOUR MOTHER USED TO SAY THAT.
SHE WAS AFRAID YOU WOULD FORGET WHAT'S IMPORTANT.
NEVER.
IS IT TIME?
YES.

IT WAS... GOOD...TO MEET YOU, MISTER ROSE. THANK YOU FOR... COMING TO WATCH OVER US.
ANYA...
SHE IS A KIND WOMAN. GOOD-HEARTED. HER MOTHER IS THE SAME, AS WAS HER GRANDMOTHER.
MIDWIVES, ALL OF THEM.
ANYA'S GRANDMOTHER DELIVERED MY BABY. MY BEAUTIFUL, DEAD BABY.
NATASHA.
YOU SHOULD STAY HERE.
THEY NEED YOU.
YOU NEED *THEM.*
YOU NEED ME, TOO.
I HAVE YOU. I KNOW YOU'RE MY FRIEND.
DON'T WAIT TO MAKE A GOOD LIFE. TIME...PASSES US TOO QUICKLY.
SHE MIGHT NOT FEEL THE SAME WAY.
AND YOU'RE TOO FINE A MAN TO WASTE ON... ROSES IN A GRAVEYARD.
DON'T WORRY.
YOU'RE AN EASY ONE TO LOVE.
BLACK WIDOW.
YOU, WITH YOUR DEADLIEST STING.

MUNICH, GERMANY.
KÄSE
LAN
SECURE CODE. ALPHA 31339.
REPORT TRACE.
Oh.
SUMI
SUMI
HIM?
EXTRACTION TIME STAMP
23221.3625.88211
91234.923443.0001
IVAN PETROVICH

WELL, HELLO. MIND IF I SIT HERE?
ONLY IF YOU'RE HUMAN. WHICH YOU'RE NOT.
CHANGING YOUR APPEARANCE DOESN'T FOOL ME.
YOU'RE JUST A ROBOT, PRETENDING TO BE A MAN, CONTROLLED BY A MAN WHO WANTS TO BE A ROBOT. STOP ME IF I'M GETTING WARM.
BOILING, MY DEAR.
DID YOU ENJOY WHAT YOU FOUND ON THE MEMORY DRIVE? I KNEW YOU WOULD SEARCH LADY BULLSEYE. THAT IS WHY I SENT HER.
THE WORD ***MEMORY*** BEING ***SO*** RELEVANT.
HOW MUCH ***DO*** YOU REMEMBER, NATASHA?
I REMEMBER ENOUGH.
BUT YOU... YOU HAVE MEMORIES THAT DON'T BELONG TO YOU.
IMUS.
IMUS CHAMPION.
FINANCIER. INDUSTRIALIST. CEO.
THAT SOUNDS SO BORING. IS THAT ALL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT ME?
I REMEMBER THAT I HELPED RUIN YOU.
AND AFTER THAT?
I SINGLEHANDEDLY INCAPACITATED ALL ***SIXTEEN*** OF THE SUPER HEROES SENT TO STOP ME. ***INCLUDING*** THE AVENGERS.
NOT BAD FOR A ***HUMAN*** MAN.
MAYBE. BUT YOU SURRENDERED IN THE END. YOU GAVE UP.
YOU'RE A LOSER, IMUS.
A GIANT, DISEASED, FREAK.
STILL MAKING UP FOR BEING A CRIPPLED, BROKEN CHILD, RIDICULED BY ALL YOUR SO-CALLED FRIENDS.
BUT YOU SHOWED THEM, DIDN'T YOU? JUST LIKE YOU THINK YOU'LL SHOW ME. THE AVENGERS, WHOEVER ELSE YOU TARGET.
IF YOU HADN'T BEEN FOOLISH ENOUGH TO KEEP FILES ON YOUR FRIENDS, WE WOULDN'T BE HERE RIGHT NOW.
I HAD NO INTENTION OF COMING AFTER YOU, OR THE AVENGERS. I HAD MORE... PRESSING CONCERNS.
UNTIL I DISCOVERED THAT SWEET LITTLE SECRET HIDING IN YOUR BELLY.
AND AFTER THAT... THE ROSE.
IVAN'S MEMORIES WERE SO SWEET. SO SHOCKING. WHEN I HARVESTED HIS BRAIN AFTER HIS DEATH, I NEVER IMAGINED WHAT I WOULD FIND.
SO I THOUGHT, ***WHY THE HELL NOT?***
IF I DESTROY YOU, I DESTROY THE HEART OF THE AVENGERS.

AND I LIKE BEING ENTERTAINED.
GOOD.
BECAUSE I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A **HELL** OF A TIME.
DO THAT. PLEASE.
MAYBE WE'LL TAKE A MOMENT TO DISCUSS YOUR DEAD BABY. **AND** YOUR DEAD HUSBAND.
PERHAPS YOUR FRIEND, JAMES **BUCKY** BARNES, CAN JOIN US?
IF HE'S STILL YOUR FRIEND. I HEAR YOU SOLD HIM OUT. RECORDED ALL HIS **FAVORITE** SEXUAL POSI--
I'LL BE COMING FOR YOU, IMUS.
THAT'S WHAT I HOPED FOR ALL--

--ALONG.
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST, NATASHA ROMANOVA.
FOR TREASONOUS ACTS AGAINST THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
GO TO HELL.
BZZZZZ
SUCH A PITY.
I'M GLAD *YOU*, AT LEAST, CAME TO YOUR SENSES. I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE LOYALTY THAT TONY STARK AND THE OTHERS CONTINUE TO SHOW THAT WOMAN.
TRUE COLORS, CAPTAIN AMERICA. THEY ALWAYS...
...COME OUT.

WELCOME BACK, NATASHA.
YOU AND IMUS CAN SHOVE IT.
WELCOME, INDEED.

TURN OUT THE LIGHT.
SHE NEEDS TIME TO GET READY FOR US.
AND FOR HIM.
I CAN'T WAIT.

BLACK WIDOW 5

"THE NAME OF THE ROSE, PART 5"

TELL YOURSELF THAT THERE ARE THINGS YOU WILL NEVER FORGET.
TELL YOURSELF THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER WHAT IS IMPORTANT.
TIME
THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE
Is this the face of a genius?
GUY HEALTH
TELL YOURSELF THAT EVERYTHING YOU LOVE WILL STAY WITH YOU, FOREVER.
DAILY BUGLE
CHAMPION ORCHESTRATES THE CORPORATE TAKEOVER OF THE CENTURY
THE HUMILIATION
IMUS CHAMPION
EVEN THOUGH IT WON'T.
NOT EVEN A LITTLE.

NOTHING LASTS.
IN THE END, ALL WE HAVE IS OURSELVES.
BUT UNLESS YOU ARE STRONG...
...AND CAREFUL...
...THAT WILL NOT BE ENOUGH.

TIRED YET OF ALL THESE GAMES?
HARDLY, IMUS.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN DAYS I'VE BEEN ABLE TO RELAX.
MY ONLY COMPLAINT IS THESE RESTRAINTS.
I'D LIKE THEM A LITTLE *TIGHTER,* PLEASE.
THAT CAN BE ARRANGED.
I DOWNLOADED THE FILES I STOLE FROM YOU, SPENT AN EVENING WITH MY FEET UP, PERUSING ALL THOSE *TITILLATING* SECRETS YOU'VE GATHERED OVER THE YEARS.
I EVEN SAW THE FILE YOU KEPT ON ME.
SLOPPY WORK, NATASHA. IT'S INCOMPLETE.
YOU WEREN'T WORTH MY TIME, IMUS.
YOU'RE STILL NOT.
YOU CAN'T EVEN FIGHT YOUR OWN BATTLES.
YOU HAVE TO USE A ROBOT. YOU HAVE TO PUT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT BETWEEN US. YOU HAVE TO USE CHEAP TRICKS LIKE MY DEAD BABY, OR LADY BULLSEYE, OR SOME OLD WOMAN WITH A SWORD.
WHICH MEANS YOU'RE EITHER SCARED OF ME... OR TOO *WEAK* TO COME AFTER ME DIRECTLY.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING, IMUS? THAT OLD DISEASE REARING ITS UGLY HEAD AGAIN?
TALK IS CHEAP, NATASHA.
WHAT MATTERS ARE RESULTS.
AND I'M GETTING *EXACTLY* WHAT I WANT.

KNOCK-KNOCK.
AM I INTERRUPTING ANYTHING?
YOU WISH.
INDEED.
I MUST ADMIT TO HAVING A SOMEWHAT *INAPPROPRIATE* DESIRE TO DISCOVER WHETHER OR NOT IMUS' ROBOT AVATAR IS ***FULLY FUNCTIONAL.***
WHY, YOU DIRTY LITTLE BIRD.
HEAR THAT, IMUS? SOMEONE HAS A ***CRUSH*** ON YOU.
NO, I--

NEVER MIND.
I'M HERE TO DISCUSS YOUR FUTURE, NATASHA. *IF* YOU HAVE ONE.
THE FILES IN MY HANDS--COMPILED FROM THE DATA CHIP WE REMOVED FROM YOUR BODY--CONTAIN ENOUGH CLASSIFIED INFORMATION TO PUT YOU AWAY FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
DON'T EXPECT YOUR FRIENDS TO MISS YOU, EITHER.
AS IF YOU'RE AN EXPERT IN FRIENDSHIP, IMUS. THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BE AROUND YOU ARE THE KIND WHO ACCEPT CASH OR CREDIT CARD.
THAT'S HOW I LIKE IT. HEARTS ARE TOO FICKLE, NATASHA.
GREED IS DEPENDABLE.
IT CERTAINLY IS.
SO WHAT DID IMUS PROMISE *YOU?*
WHAT GOT YOUR PANTIES SO WET YOU HAD TO FACILITATE AN ASSAULT ON BOTH MY LIFE AND FREEDOM?
WATCH YOUR MOUTH. YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A CRIMINAL. A SPY.
I'M THE *BLACK WIDOW.*
I COULD EAT YOU FOR LUNCH.
MAYBE NOT IN ONE SITTING, THOUGH.
I HAVE MY LIMITS.
YOU FILTHY--

--WHORE!
KRAK
OOMPH!
WHAT? WHAT'S HAPPENED?
THE START OF SOMETHING INTERESTING, I THINK.

KLING!
KLING!
W-WHAT WAS THAT?
KLANG!
THUD!
SURPRISE.
H-HELP ME, IMUS! *DON'T JUST SIT THERE!*
SAVE YOUR BREATH.
IMUS ISN'T GOING TO WASTE A FIGHT WITH ME NOW. HE'S NOT GOING TO USE A ROBOT TO KILL ME. IF HE WANTED THAT, HE WOULD HAVE TRIED BY NOW.
HE WANTS THIS TO BE ONE-ON-ONE, WITH HIS REAL HANDS.
LIKE A REAL MAN. GETTING OFF ON HITTING A REAL GIRL.
WHICH MEANS THAT IMUS DOESN'T CARE IF I KILL YOU.
AND NEITHER DO I.

W-WHAT DO YOU WANT?
THE TRUTH. YOU FRAMED ME. MADE IT LOOK AS THOUGH I WAS SELLING OUT MY FRIENDS. ADMIT IT.
F-FINE. IT'S TRUE.
IMUS PROMISED NEW WEAPONS TECHNOLOGY. THE INTEL YOU'D GATHERED ON THE AVENGERS AND OTHERS ALSO MADE IT WORTHWHILE.
FOR YOU AND WHO ELSE?
A SMALL G-GROUP. WOULD HAVE PAID DEBTS WE OWE TO N-NORMAN OSBORN.
THANK YOU.
THAT'S *EXACTLY* WHAT I CAME FOR.
WHAT? YOU LET YOURSELF BE CAPTURED?
FOR THIS. I INSERTED IT MYSELF, A LITTLE OVER A WEEK AGO.
A SUBDERMAL CYBERNETIC IMPLANT.
A VOICE RECORDER, IF YOU WILL. I'VE BEEN TAPING THIS WHOLE CONVERSATION.
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
THE INFORMATION HAS BEEN DISSEMINATED. ALL THOSE SECRETS WE TOOK FROM YOU HAVE BEEN SPREAD TO THE WIND. YOU C-CAN'T STOP THAT.
I ALREADY DID.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU WERE SLOPPY, IMUS.
WHAT YOU SPREAD WAS A COMPUTER VIRUS.
I ACTIVATED IT DAYS AGO, WITH NOTHING BUT A PHONE CALL. EVERY COMPUTER THAT HAS DOWNLOADED OR SHARED THAT INFORMATION IS GOING TO IMPLODE. INLCUDING THE ONE--

--IN YOUR HEAD.
NNNGH!
DAMN IT!
Oh, GOD.
YES. THIS WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO START PRAYING.
PLEASE DON'T KILL ME. I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU WANT.
FABULOUS.
I WANT YOU TO TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES.

YOU CAN'T *DO* THIS.
DON'T BE SILLY.
IT'S THE *LEAST* I CAN DO.
BESIDES, I NEVER GET BETWEEN A MAN AND HIS... MEAT.
*!!
BRRRRTTRRRRTRTRBRRRRTTRR
NICE.
VERY HOT.
Oh, STOP IT.
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU BOYS TO WAIT IN THE PARKING LOT.
YOU TOOK SO LONG TO BREAK OUT, LOGAN HAD TO USE THE POTTY.
OLD MAN. WEAK BLADDER.

RESTRICTED AREA
YOU CAN WATCH IF YOU WANT, JAMES.
YES, *JAMES.* DON'T MIND ME.
SHUT UP.
YES, LOGAN. PLEASE DO. YOU'RE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS WITH ME, YET.
A LITTLE WARNING WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE.
HE AND I HAVE HAD THIS DISCUSSION.
CAN'T WAIT TO HAVE IT AGAIN.
I'M SURE.
SKT!
HERE. GIVE IT TO THE OTHERS. LET THEM KNOW THE LEAK HAS BEEN NEUTRALIZED.
YOU'RE NOT COMING WITH US?
NO.
NATASHA--
LET IT REST, JAMES.
I KNOW WHAT I NEED TO DO.

MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA.
SIR, PLEASE. NOT TO PRY, BUT IF YOU WON'T TELL US WHAT YOU WERE DOING WHEN THE IMPLANT OVERLOADED--
--WE WON'T BE ABLE TO PREVENT IT FROM HAPPENING AGAIN IN THE FUTURE.
IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
JUST SHUT UP AND FIX ME.
AS YOU WISH... SIR.
BUT WE SHOULD, AT THE VERY LEAST, CONTACT THE ORIGINAL DESIGNER OF THIS TECHNOLOGY. HIS NAME WAS NED, YES? HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO--
NO. THAT WON'T BE POSSIBLE.
BECAUSE YOU HAD HIM *KILLED.*
HELLO, IMUS.
CALL SECURITY--
NO.
NO NEED.
DOCTOR, TAKE YOUR PEOPLE AND LEAVE US.
LOOK AT THEM RUN. NOT A SINGLE ONE LOYAL ENOUGH TO STAND BY YOU.
DOES THAT EVER MAKE YOU LONELY, IMUS?
BETTER TO ASK YOURSELF THAT QUESTION, NATASHA.

WHEN IT COMES RIGHT DOWN TO IT, YOU'RE JUST AS ALONE AS I AM. BY CHOICE, NO LESS.
BOTH OF US FEEL STRONGER IN SOLITUDE.
IT'S OUR NATURE.
BECAUSE WE'RE KILLERS.
IVAN'S BRAIN.
YOUR MENTOR. THE MAN WHO RAISED YOU. SUCH A STRANGE COFFIN FOR A LEGEND.
I COULDN'T PART WITH HIS BRAIN, EVEN AFTER I DOWNLOADED HIS MEMORIES.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE IT?
PERHAPS, IN EXCHANGE FOR YOURS?
CUT THE CRAP, IMUS.
LET'S FINISH THIS.
FINALLY.

!
JUST A TICKLE, NATASHA.
YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN--
--THAT.
CRAK
NNGH.
WAS THAT *HARD* ENOUGH FOR YOU?
TRY *THIS*--
YOU *BASTARD!*

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
NATASHA ROMANOVA. LITTLE GIRL. MORE WHORE THAN SPY.
YOU COULDN'T EVEN SAVE YOUR HUSBAND, ALL THOSE YEARS AGO. YOU COULDN'T KEEP A BABY ALIVE IN YOUR WOMB.
YOU CAN'T... BEAT ME.
ZZZZ!!
I DON'T WANT TO BEAT YOU, IMUS.
I JUST--
--WANT--
--TO KILL--
--YOU!
GUKK!
THUD!
RAAGH!

NNGH.
ARGH!
YOU'RE PATHETIC, IMUS.
YOU WERE A WEAK CHILD, AND YOU'RE A WEAKER MAN.
YOU'VE SPENT YOUR ENTIRE LIFE TRYING TO GET THE UPPER HAND. AND IT MEANS **NOTHING.**
BECAUSE ***YOU'RE*** NOTHING.
YOU DON'T MATTER... ***NNGH*** TO ANYONE.

STICKS AND STONES.
ADMIT IT, NATASHA. SOMETIMES YOU WANT TO JUST GIVE UP. LET IT ALL GO. YOU'VE BEEN ALIVE SUCH A LONG TIME.
OUTLIVED WARS. LOVERS.
YOUR BABY.
CRASH!!
AND IT WILL NEVER END.
GET UP.
OR SURRENDER.
SAY PLEASE.
Oh, NATASHA.
HOW MUCH LONGER CAN YOU GO ON? HOW STRONG IS YOUR WILL TO LIVE?
HOW STRONG IS YOURS, IMUS?

AAGH!
YAAA RRRGH
BRACE YOURSELF, IMUS.
THIS IS GOING TO TICKLE.
TCHAK
AND NO.
HNF HNF
I NEVER THINK ABOUT GIVING UP.

DO *YOU?*
YOU TALK TOO MUCH.
GET IT OVER WITH. MAKE IT QUICK.
YOU... *WANT* ME TO SHOOT YOU.
JUST DO IT, YOU BITCH.
YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO.
YES. YOU MADE SURE OF THAT, DIDN'T YOU?
WHY IS THAT, IMUS? WHY DO I GET THE FEELING THAT YOU'RE JUST... USING ME...TO GET SOMETHING ELSE THAT YOU WANT?
I SAW YOUR MEDICATION WHEN YOU THREW ME INTO THAT TABLE.
YOU *ARE* DYING.

DYING. DECAYING. USE ANY WORD YOU WANT. BUT I WON'T GO OUT... WEAK.
YOU'RE ON YOUR KNEES, IMUS. YOU LOST THE FIGHT. YOU *ARE* WEAK.
YOU'RE ALSO EXACTLY WHERE YOU WANT TO BE.
YOU *WANT* ME TO SHOOT YOU. YOU WANT ME TO END YOUR LIFE, BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE THE STONES TO DO IT YOURSELF. YOU WANT YOUR BODY DEAD SO YOU CAN SEND YOUR MIND INTO THAT ROBOT OVER THERE.
I KILL YOU... AND YOU GET A WHOLE NEW LIFE.
NO, THANKS.
SMAK!
DON'T GIVE UP YET, IMUS.
LIVE A LITTLE.

YOU CAN'T WIN BY WALKING AWAY, NATASHA.
I HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY. AND EVEN IF YOU TAKE THAT AWAY, I STILL HAVE MY MEMORIES. ENOUGH TO REBUILD.
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO END THIS FOR GOOD.
SHUT UP, IMUS.
YOU'LL DIE ONE DAY.
SO WILL I.
BUT UNLIKE YOU... I'LL SHOW SOME SPINE.
AND I WON'T BE ALONE.
GOOD-BYE, IMUS.
NA...TA...SHA...
IN ABOUT TEN SECONDS, YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE YOUR MIND. AND YOUR TECHNOLOGY.
ENJOY.
NO... NO...
UGHH...
Ehhh...

I DISCOVERED THE WRITER, LEO TOLSTOY, IN A MUDDY DITCH THAT HELD MORE BLOOD THAN RAIN. ONE OF THE SOLDIERS LOVED HIS WORDS--AND THEN, SO DID I.
"ALL, EVERYTHING THAT I UNDERSTAND," HE WROTE, "I UNDERSTAND ONLY BECAUSE I LOVE."
THANK YOU FOR HANDLING ALL THE DETAILS, JAMES. YOU KNOW HOW I HATE PAPERWORK.
THAT WAS SO MANY YEARS AGO.
BUT WORDS ON A PAGE DIDN'T TEACH ME THAT LESSON. I LEARNED IT ON MY OWN.
I'LL BE HOME SOON. BY THE END OF THE WEEK, I THINK.
I LEARNED IT IN TRENCHES WITH BULLETS FLYING OVERHEAD; PRESSED BACK TO BACK WITH GRIZZLED STARVING MEN WHO WOULD HAVE LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR MINE.
I HAVE... UNFINISHED BUSINESS...WITH LADY BULLSEYE TO TAKE CARE OF.
YES, I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT. ONE DAY.
I LEARNED IT FROM A RIBBON TIED AROUND MY RING FINGER.
I LEARNED IT FROM A KICK INSIDE MY BELLY.
GASP
I LEARNED IT FROM DEATH, AND HARDSHIP, AND BRIEF ACTS OF INEXPLICABLE KINDNESS.
I KNOW. I'LL BE CAREFUL.
I LEARNED LOVE FROM SACRIFICE.
I LEARNED LOVE FROM LIVING.
AND NO MATTER WHERE I'VE GONE, OR WHAT I'VE DONE--ALL THE DARK THINGS I DO NOT REGRET, BUT WILL NEVER SPEAK OF--THAT IS THE ONE PART OF ME THAT I HAVE ALWAYS KEPT SAFE.
I LOVE YOU, JAMES.
IMUS WAS SUCH A FOOL.
KRANKENW

TOLSTOY WILL LIVE FOREVER.
SOME PEOPLE DO.
BUT THAT'S NOT ENOUGH. IT'S NOT THE LENGTH OF A LIFE THAT MATTERS...
...JUST THE DEPTH OF IT.
THE CHANCES WE TAKE.
THE PATHS WE CHOOSE.
HOW WE GO ON AFTER OUR HEARTS BREAK.

HEARTS ALWAYS BREAK.
AND SO WE BEND WITH OUR HEARTS.
AND WE SWAY.
BUT IN THE END...
...WHAT MATTERS IS THAT WE **LOVED**... AND **LIVED**.

ENTER THE HEROIC AGE
"COPPÉLIA"

THE STATE KREMLIN PALACE, MOSCOW.
Ah, COPPÉLIA...
...A COMIC BALLET ABOUT A LIFE-SIZE DOLL, BASED ON TWO INCREDIBLY MACABRE E.T.A. HOFFMANN SHORT STORIES.
I HAVE FOND MEMORIES OF DANCING THE ROLE WHEN I WAS A CHILD...
COPPÉLIA
PROVING, ONCE AGAIN, THAT WHOEVER PLANTED MY MEMORIES WAS A MONSTER...
...WITH A FABULOUS SENSE OF HUMOR.
LINA ALEKSEEVA, G.R.U. AGENT...
...SHE'S HERE TO KEEP AN EYE ON ME ON BEHALF OF RUSSIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE.
JUST LIKE THE GOOD OLD DAYS.
GIDEON AND KLARA BEAUPARLANT, D.G.S.E.
GOOD TO KNOW THE FRENCH ARE STILL IN THE GAME.
AND...BINGO.
BLACK WIDOW IN
COPPÉLIA

SARKIS SAKAL, INTERNATIONAL ARMS DEALER... AND MY TARGET.
IT'S NOT OFTEN THE BIG MAN CLOSES A DEAL IN PERSON, BUT WORD HAS IT HE'S PARTICULARLY PROUD OF THIS ONE.
IT'S A DEVICE FOR TARGETED ASSASSINATIONS, CODE-NAMED малюсенький танцор-- "TINY DANCER." THAT'S ALL WE'VE GOT.
AND THIS MUST BE OUR BUYER...
MY JOB IS TO INTERCEPT TINY DANCER--OR INFORMATION AS TO ITS WHEREABOUTS--AND DELIVER IT TO MY CLIENTS WITH THE SECRET INTELLIGENCE SERVICE TO FERRY BACK TO LONDON.
A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED SPY GIG. NO TIME-TRAVELING SPACE VILLAINS, NO MASKS, NO AVENGERS...I COULD GET USED TO THIS.
HERE WE GO...
oppēlia 12 Апрель
...WAIT A SECOND...
...IT'S THE GIRL.

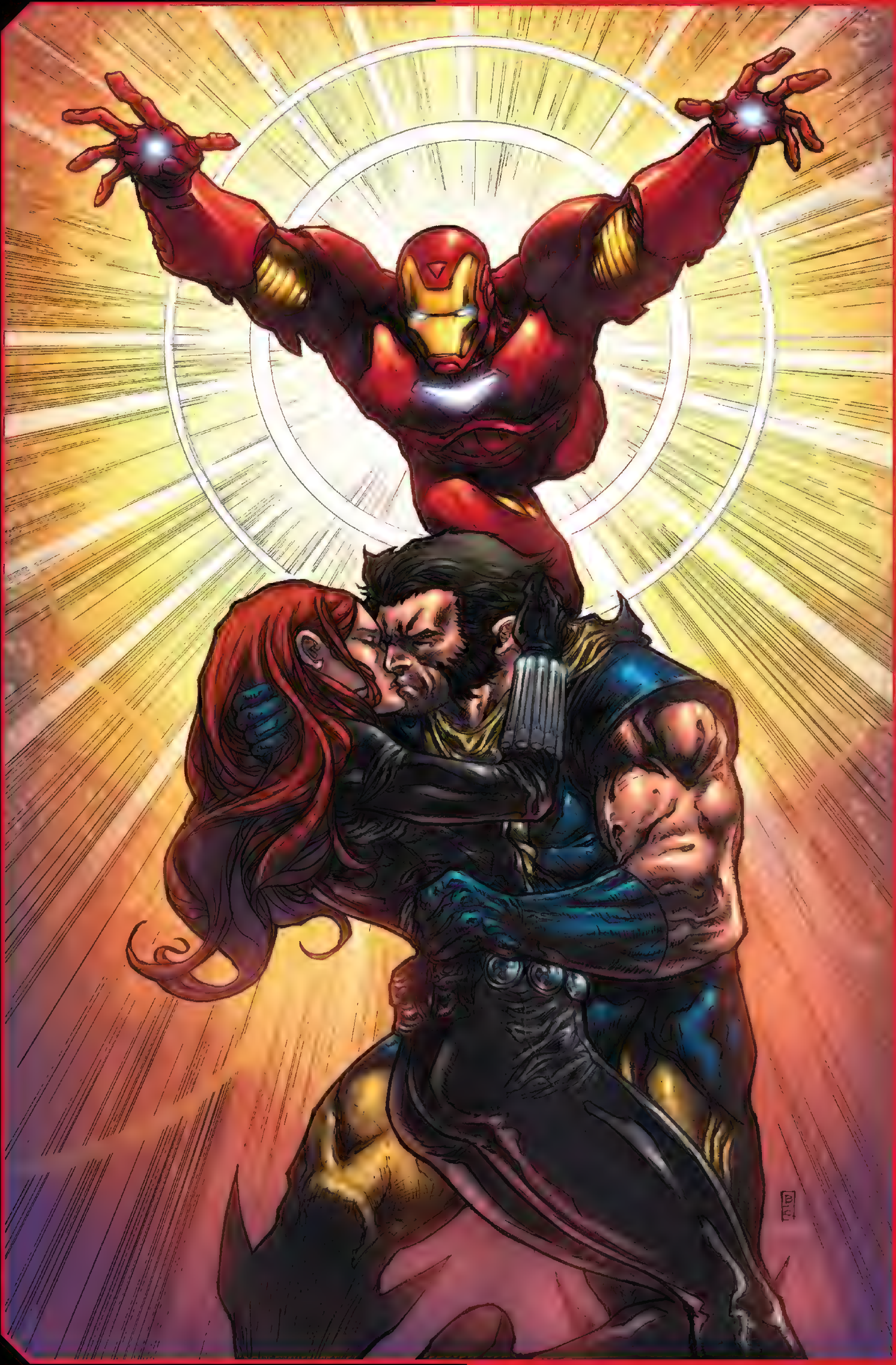
THE SECOND CASE IS A DUMMY FOR THE PAYOFF EXCHANGE...
...TINY DANCER IS THE GIRL!
<NATALIA! WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?!>
?
COME ON, HONEY. WORK WITH ME HERE...
<YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO HAVE CHECKED IN BACKSTAGE TWO HOURS AGO! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW THIS MAKES ME LOOK?!>
<--LADY, YOU'RE MAKING A HUGE-->
<RUNNING AROUND WITH STRANGE MEN! YOU SHOULD BE-->
<--DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH ME!!>
<YOU THINK YOU'RE A BIG MAN? A BIG MAN WHO PUSHES A LADY, huh?>
<I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU THINK YOU'RE PULLING-->
<IF MY HUSBAND WERE STILL ALIVE-->
<MISS, DO YOU KNOW THIS WOMAN...?>

<AGENT ALEKSEEVA, G.R.U.>
<YOU WANT TO EXPLAIN TO ME ON *JUST WHOSE AUTHORITY* YOU'RE BRANDISHING A *WEAPON* IN A *STATE BUILDING*?>
<FIRST CHANCE I GET TO SEE A SHOW THIS YEAR, AND YOU RUIN IT...>
LINA, I OWE YOU ONE. ***AT LEAST ONE.***
<DO YOU KNOW THAT WOMAN?>
<I KNEW HER TO BE AN HONORABLE SOLDIER, MANY YEARS AGO. AND IT SEEMS SHE HOLDS ME IN SIMILAR REGARD.>
<SO YOU'RE NOT WITH THE G.R.U.?>
<NOPE!>
<PUT THESE ON.>
<QUICKLY! SAKAL'S MEN WILL BE ON THEIR WAY BY NOW. HE'S GOING TO THINK HE'S BEEN SET UP.>
<HAS HE?>
<KEEP GUESSING, MINI-ME.>

<OKAY, IT'S CLEAR.>
<HEAD FOR THE KREMLIN GATE. WE'LL MEET MY CONTACT OUTSIDE THE WALLS.>
<LADY, I'M THROUGH DOING AS I'M TOLD.>
I HAD HOPED YOU WERE **SMARTER** THAN I WAS AT YOUR AGE...
...BUT IT'S **NOT** LIKE I DIDN'T SEE THIS COMING.
TEENAGERS.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SURPRISE ME, DOLL.
WE WERE PROBABLY TAUGHT FROM THE SAME TEXTBOOK, EVEN.
YOU SPEAK ENGLISH?
I DOUBT THAT.
SURPRISE!
LISTEN TO ME...
...I DO NOT *WANT* TO BREAK YOUR LEG, BUT I'LL DO IT IF IT MEANS *SAVING YOUR LIFE.*
HAVE I GOT YOUR ATTENTION?
... *MAYBE.*
"I DON'T KNOW WHO *MADE YOU,* BUT I DO KNOW THAT IF THEY CAN'T *CONTROL YOU,* THEY CAN'T *SELL YOU.*
"AND IF THEY CAN'T *SELL YOU,* THEY'LL HAVE TO *KILL YOU.*
"I'M WORKING FOR *THE GOOD GUYS,* ALL RIGHT? THEY'LL TREAT YOU LIKE A *HUMAN BEING...*
"...JUST AS SOON AS I LET THEM KNOW YOU *ARE* A HUMAN BEING. THEY'RE EXPECTING A *SUITCASE...*"

THERE. S.I.S. AGENTS IF EVER I SAW THEM...
...WITH CUFFS?
KEEP MOVING...
THEY'RE EXPECTING THE GIRL. THEY KNEW!
YOUR CONTACTS?
NO. LOOKS LIKE THEY DIDN'T SHOW...
TIME FOR PLAN B...
TODAY IS YOUR LUCKY DAY, DOLL.
I JUST HAPPEN TO HAVE THE CAVALRY ON SPEED DIAL.
TURNS OUT THAT SOMETIMES THE GUYS IN THE MASKS...
ROGERS.
STEVE? NATASHA.
ABOUT THAT OFFER YOU MADE... I'M IN.
BUT I'M GOING TO NEED A FAVOR.
ANYTHING YOU NEED...
...ARE REALLY THE GOOD GUYS AFTER ALL.



IRON MAN: KISS AND KILL

“IRON WIDOW”

IRON WIDOW

28,000 FEET OVER RUSTAVI, GEORGIA...
ACTIVATE MOUTH. OPEN *MOUTH.*

GET IT OPEN, IDIOT, BEFORE NATASHA SUFFOCATES.
ACTUALLY, I WAS PLANNING ON FREEZING FIRST.
COME ON, SUIT. I MADE YOU. I CONTROL YOU.
OH TONY...
BOOOM
...WHY CAN'T YOU HOLD ON TO YOUR TOYS?

STARK ENTERPRISES, LOS ANGELES. FIVE WEEKS AGO...
THIS ARMOR WAS *DECOMMISSIONED* AND *BURIED* YEARS AGO WITH A *SELF-DESTRUCT PROTOCOL* IN CASE OF DISCOVERY.
AND YET IT'S BEEN *STOLEN.* HOW MANY SUITS IS THAT NOW?
IT'S NOT *MINE.* NOT *ENTIRELY.* IT WAS A *COLLABORATION.*
WHO *WITH?*
SORRY, THAT'S *CLASSIFIED* BEYOND BLACK WIDOW LEVEL. LET'S JUST SAY THE WEAPONRY IN *THIS MODEL* WAS DEVELOPED AGAINST MY *BETTER JUDGMENT.*
RUSSIA
GEORGIA
COLD WAR ARMOR. WERE YOU FEELING NOSTALGIC?
WE'VE TRACKED IT TO AN ILLEGAL ARMS FACTORY IN *GEORGIA.* I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN *ACCESS* THE ARMOR AND FLY IT OUT BEFORE THEY BREAK THE ENCRYPTION AND DEPLOY IT THEMSELVES.
YOU'LL MAKE A *FINE* RUSSIAN.

FOUR WEEKS AGO...
SO WHEN THE SOVIETS SENT YOU TO INFILTRATE STARK INDUSTRIES, WHY DIDN'T THEY GIVE YOU AN AMERICAN MAKEOVER?
RESEARCH TOLD US YOU'D FIND IT HOTTER TO TURN A COMRADE.
YOU DIDN'T ESCAPE WITH ANYTHING AS I RECALL.
DON'T REMEMBER BEING CAUGHT EITHER.
SO PEPPER, CAN I PASS AS A REDHEAD? DO I NEED FRECKLES?
YOU NEED A WHOLE NEW PERSONALITY.
THREE WEEKS AGO...
TY MNE NRAVISHSYA.
TY MNE NRAVISHSYA.
STOP LEANING ON THE LANGUAGE IMPLANT AND FOCUS ON THE MUSIC OF IT.
TWO WEEKS AGO...
LESSONS IN DANCING I DON'T NEED.
YOU DANCE LIKE AN AMERICAN.
ONE WEEK AGO...
RETINAL DISGUISE COMPLETE. NOW LET'S...
...TEST THE NON-VERBAL COMS LINK.
ENOUGH GADGETS. TIME TO DEPLOY SOME WEAPONS GRADE CHARM.

SIX HOURS AGO... ILLEGAL ARMS FACTORY OUTSIDE RUSTAVI, GEORGIA...
<DELIGHTED TO MEET YOU, DOCTOR NUBIN.>
<PROFESSOR TRASKI, THE HONOR IS MINE.>
<THIS ORDNANCE IS PRETTY VANILLA. I WAS TOLD YOU HAD PARANORMAL TECH.>
<PERHAPS WHEN WE HAVE BEEN IN BUSINESS A LITTLE LONGER WE CAN OPEN UP OUR FULL CATALOGUE TO YOU.>
<I LOOK FORWARD TO DEEPENING OUR RELATIONSHIP.>
THIS ISN'T SPEED-DATING, TONY. YOUR PHEROMONE AFTERSHAVE WON'T HAVE KICKED IN YET.
DON'T THINK SO LOUD, NATASHA.
<YOU REMIND ME OF MY EX-HUSBAND. HE HAD RED HAIR.>
<SMALL WORLD. YOU SOUND LIKE YOU MISS HIM.>
<HE DRANK LIKE A FISH TOO.>
<IF THIS IS ALL YOU'VE GOT FOR ME, DR. NUBIN, IT'S GOING TO BE A SHORT VISIT.>
<CALL ME TESSA.>
CAREFUL TONY. THE NANO-ABSORBERS WE INSTALLED IN YOUR THROAT ONLY TAKE THE ALCOHOL DOWN TO THREE PERCENT. YOU CAN STILL GET DRUNK.
AND I KNOW HOW YOU'D HATE THAT.

<I HOPE YOU DON'T EXPECT PREFERENTIAL TERMS SIMPLY BECAUSE I FIND YOU ATTRACTIVE.>
<I THINK I ALREADY TOLD YOU I'M NOT BUYING WHAT YOU'RE OFFERING.>
<THEN YOU WILL RETURN TO TBILISI EMPTY-HANDED.>
<I WOULDN'T SAY THAT.>
DNA PATCH ESTABLISHED. TWO SECONDS AND OUR FLUID SENSORS WILL HAVE NEURAL ACCESS. HOLD THAT POSITION.
I KNOW HOW TO KISS, NATASHA.
SO DO I.
HER CHEMISTRY'S OFF. TONY, SHE'S HACKING YOUR BRAIN!!!

FORGIVE ME. I HAD TO VERIFY YOU'RE THE GENUINE ARTICLE AND NOT SOME ANNOYING LMD.
<ER...SORRY I DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH. DID I DO SOMETHING WRONG?>
<DR. NUBIN? TESSA?>
TONY DARLING.
RED IS SO NOT YOUR COLOR.
SUNSET BAIN!!!
TONY, I NEED ACCESS TO YOUR MEMORIES.
ALLOW ME, MS. ROMANOFF. I'M THE INDUSTRIAL SPY WHO SUCCEEDED WHERE YOU FAILED.
I SEDUCED TONY LONG BEFORE YOU AND STOLE HIS SECRETS BEFORE YOU WERE EVEN A SPY.
SHE SEDUCED A BOY. GIVE HER A MEDAL.

SUNSET, I DON'T KNOW WHICH **SUPER VILLAIN** IS PAYING YOUR BILLS THIS WEEK BUT YOU'RE DEALING WITH A DIFFERENT ORDER OF WEAPON HERE. THE **DOWNSIDE** DOESN'T BEAR **THINKING** ABOUT.
OH TONY, ANYONE WOULD THINK YOU'D NEVER WORKED FOR A SUPER VILLAIN **YOURSELF**. THAT'S WHY **THIS** SUIT IS SO **SPECIAL**.
I WONDER IF NATASHA KNOWS WHO YOUR **REAL PARTNER** IS.
"EVEN WITH ALL THE **INTEL** WE PUT OUT IT TOOK YOU NEARLY **TWO MONTHS** TO **BITE**. I'D ALMOST GIVEN UP.
"WITHOUT YOUR BRAINWAVES IT WOULD'VE TAKEN **YEARS** TO BYPASS THE **ENCRYPTION** BUILT INTO YOUR ARMOR'S **FLIGHT PROGRAM**."
THIS SLAVE DISC I ADAPTED FROM THE **CONTROLLER** WILL **INCAPACITATE** YOUR **MOTOR FUNCTIONS**--
--LEAVING YOUR **BRAINWAVE SIGNATURE** TO KEEP YOU ON TARGET.
NOW I CAN ARM THE **FUSION DEVICES** EMBEDDED INTO EVERY INCH OF YOUR **ARMOR**. SO LONG, **GOLDEN AVENGER**, HELLO, **GUIDED MISSILE**. NOW **THAT'S** WHAT I CALL A **MAKEOVER**.
SHE'S INSIDE THE SECOND PERIMETER!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE MAKING ME BREAK OUT THE HEAVY ARTILLERY TO DEAL WITH ONE **GLORIFIED ACROBAT**. YOU CAN ALL FORGET ABOUT YOUR **BONUS**.
LAUNCH HIM.

NATASHA, WE'RE OUT OF TIME!
FORGET ME. NUKE THE FACILITY.
WE HAD A DEAL, NATASHA.
I'M PERFECTLY HAPPY TO KILL YOU, TONY.
TZZAAAPP
ONCE I'VE EXPLORED THE OPTIONS.

YOUR OPTIONS JUST *EXPIRED.*
I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH I *HATE* BEING REDUCED TO YOUR LEVEL.
TZZAAKKK
OR MAYBE I *CAN.*
DISENGAGE, NATASHA; YOU CAN'T TAKE HER.
THWIPP
PTING!
I EXPECT YOU'RE GETTING *OFF* ON THIS LITTLE *CATFIGHT,* TONY.

THIS IS NO CATFIGHT, MS. BAIN.
IF YOU POWER DOWN NOW...
I'LL LET YOU LIVE.
HOW GENEROUS.
TONY...
I'M... LOSING IT. NATASHA, HURRY--
SNAP

UHHN!
THAT SOUNDS LIKE THE LAST OF YOUR SHOCK ABSORBERS. ONE MORE DIRECT HIT SHOULD DO IT.
NATASHA, IT'S THE VERSION 4 CRIMSON DYNAMO. THE POWER MANAGEMENT IS COMPROMISED BY NEUTRON RADIATION.
USE THE PULSE RIFLE AND AIM IT AT THE AIR CON UNDER THE THIRD RIB.
FORGET ME! CONCENTRATE ON BLOCKING THE LAUNCH!
CAN'T.
FLIGHT COMPUTER ONLINE
T-MINUS FIFTEEN SECONDS

GOT HER!
BOOOM
SORRY, TONY; I CLOSED THAT LOOPHOLE.
I DON'T DEAL IN CHEAP RUSSIAN BOOTLEGS. I ADD VALUE TO MY ACQUISITIONS.
HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE CRUSHED UNDER A SYMBOL OF YOUR FORMER NATION?
OH PLEASE. YOU THINK YOUR PATHETIC SKIPPING ROPE IS GOING TO KNOCK HIM OFF COURSE?
THWIPP
SZZAKK
NO. BUT A STING PULSE DOWN THE CABLE MIGHT.

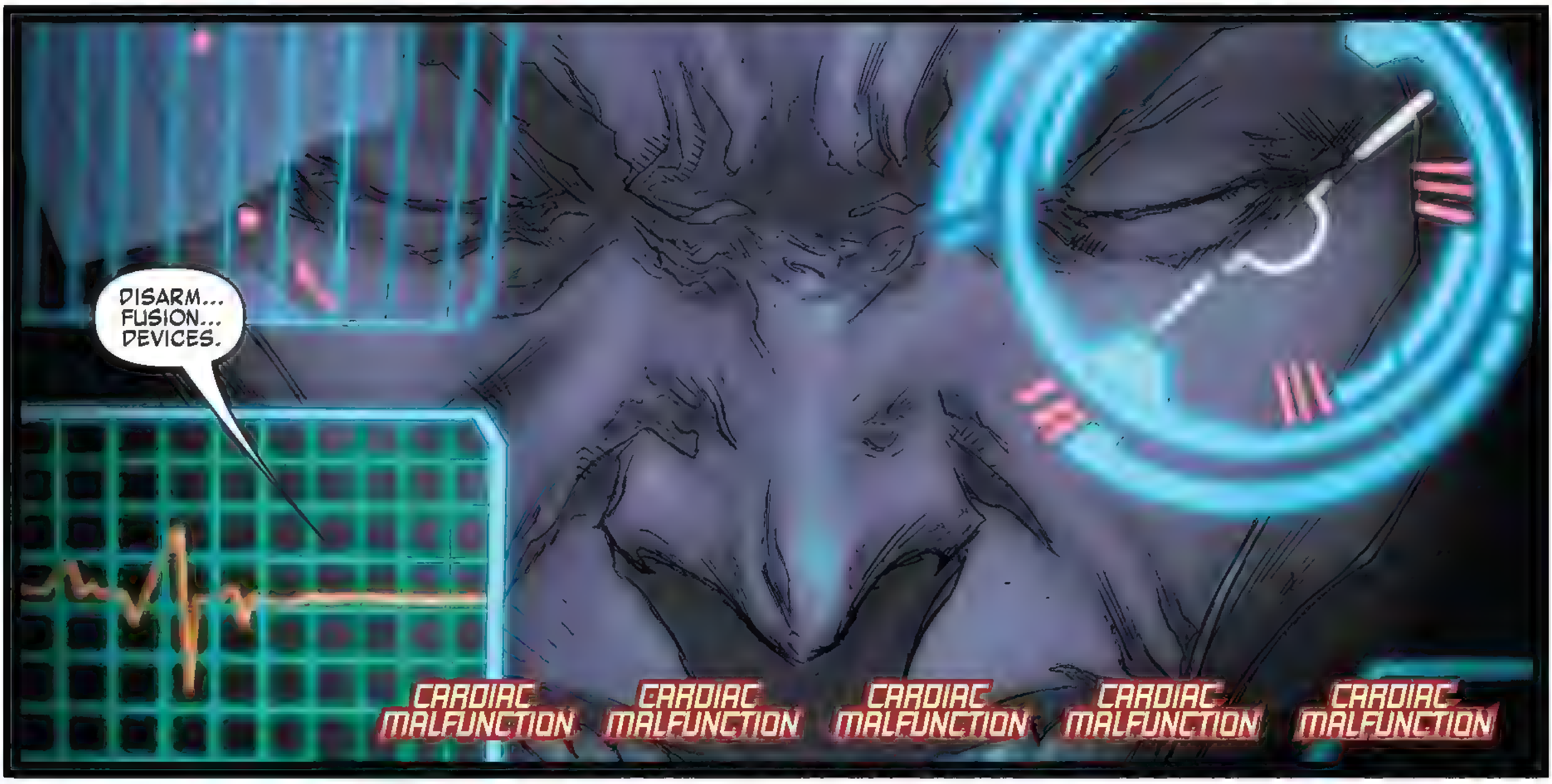
POWER SURGE GYRO CORRUPTION
WHA--
REPAIRING GPS PROTOCOLS
AAAIIEEE!
SNAP
AAGHH!
TONY...SHOULDER'S DISLOCATED... USING AUTORETRACT TO REEL ME IN. YOU BETTER GET IN CONTROL UP THERE.
RECALCULATING TRAJECTORY
THIS IS A TRANS-ORBITAL TRAJECTORY. I'M GOING TO NEED AIR, SO YOU BETTER GET YOUR...

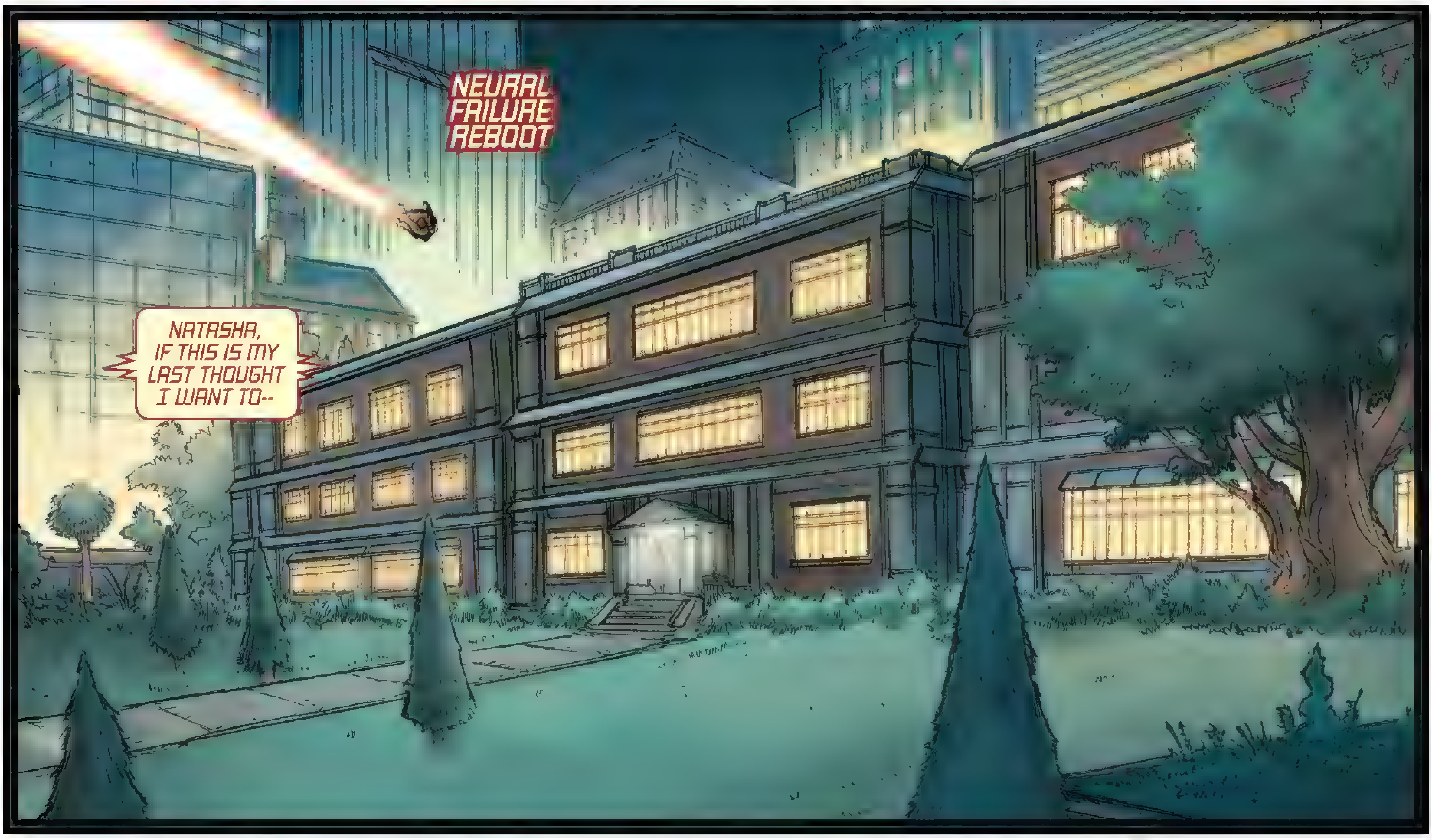
FOUR MINUTES LATER...
MOUTH OPEN, DAMMIT!
SORRY, TONY, THAT'S MY LIMIT...
I RUN YOU DAMMIT-- MOUTH OPEN!!
DEPRESSURIZATION ERROR
SNIKT
ARE YOU IN CONTROL NOW?
I'VE GOT MY BODY BACK BUT THE ARMOR'S FROZEN. I'M LOCKED OUT.
CAN YOU EXTRACT THE TARGET?

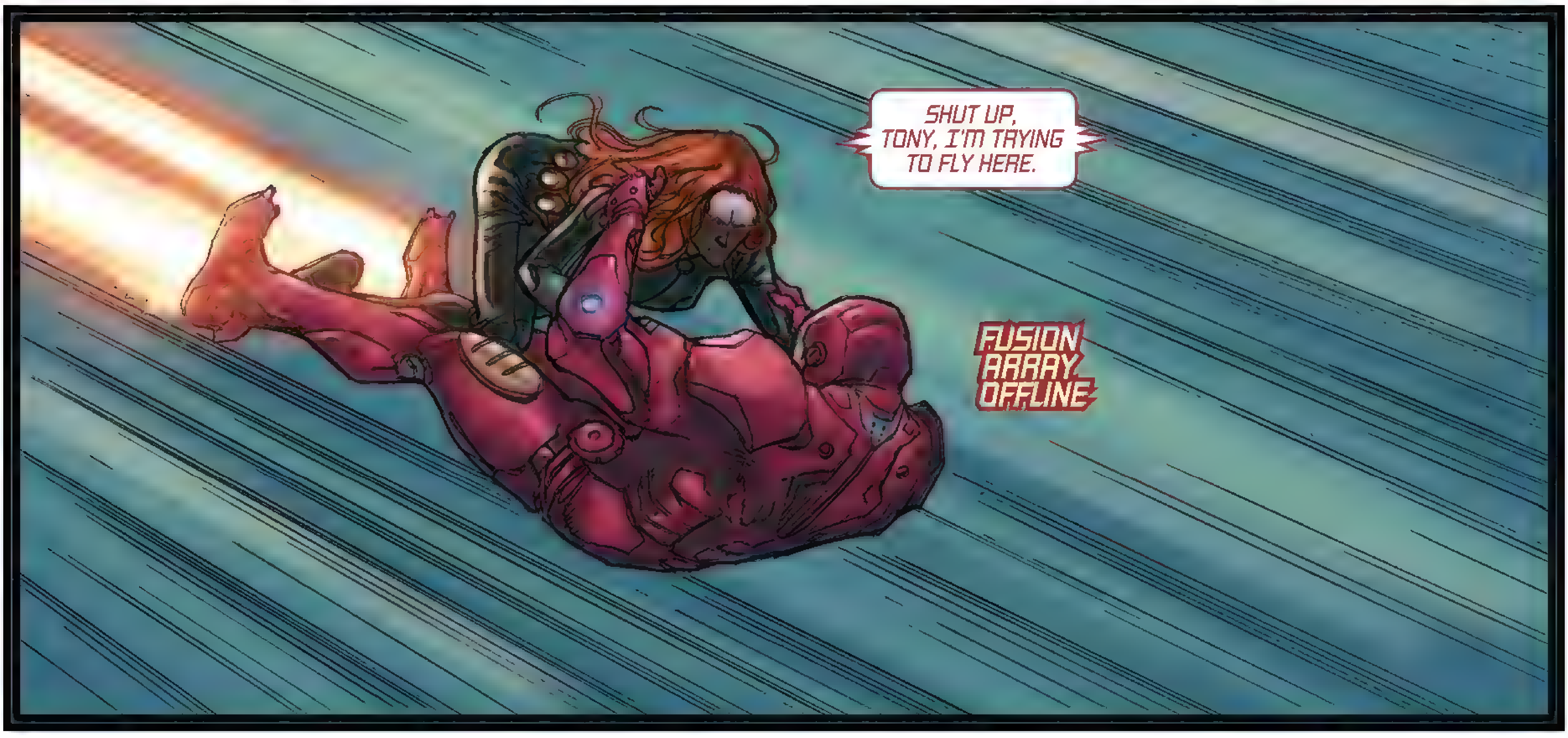
AVENGERS MANSION.
YOU MEAN STARK TOWER?
I MEAN THE *ORIGINAL* AVENGERS MANSION.
BUT IT'S ALREADY *DESTROYED*. WHY DOES SHE WANT TO TAKE OUT A *RUIN?*
SHE'S NOT TAKING IT OUT *NOW*. SHE'S TAKING IT OUT IN THE *PAST*.
TEMPORAL PORT OPEN.
WHAT THE HELL KIND OF ARMOR *IS* THIS?
TEMPORAL ARMOR. GOT THE IDEA FROM AN *OLD FRIEND*.
DOCTOR DOOM.

I CAN *SEE* AVENGERS MANSION. I CAN SEE IT AS IT *WAS.* WHEN ARE WE?
THE BIRTH OF THE AVENGERS. WE'RE HERE TO DESTROY THEM BEFORE THEY BEGIN.

IT'S A FINE LAST WISH, NATASHA, AND I'M HONORED, BUT EVEN WITH YOUR TECHNIQUE I DON'T THINK YOU CAN KISS ME FROM OUT THERE.
TONY, OPEN YOUR MOUTH.
I'M NOT GOING TO KISS YOU, TONY. OPEN WIDE.
SHOULD I ASK OR JUST SWALLOW?
IT'S A HEART ATTACK PILL. IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO BREAK THE NEURAL CONNECTION AND DISARM THE FUSION CHARGES.
YOU PACK A SUICIDE PILL ON EVERY MISSION?
COULD AT LEAST OFFER A CHASER.


DISARM... FUSION... DEVICES.
CARDIAC MALFUNCTION
CARDIAC MALFUNCTION
CARDIAC MALFUNCTION
CARDIAC MALFUNCTION
CARDIAC MALFUNCTION


NEURAL FAILURE REBOOT
NATASHA, IF THIS IS MY LAST THOUGHT I WANT TO--


SHUT UP, TONY, I'M TRYING TO FLY HERE.
FUSION ARRAY OFFLINE

CRASSSH
ILLEGAL FLIGHT MANEUVER

TEMPORAL PORT OPEN
ZZZRAAKKK!
OW! WHAT THE HELL!!

YOU HAVE A WEAK HEART OR ARE YOU TRYING TO SCARE ME?
OF COURSE. YOU'RE MY RIDE HOME.
I GAVE YOU A SCARE.
BABA S VOZU KOBYLE LEGCHE.*
*NEVER SEND A WOMAN TO DO A MAN'S JOB.
END...

BLACK WIDOW 6

"KISS OR KILL, PART 1"

WASHINGTON, D.C.
AT THE HEIGHT OF THE COLD WAR, THE SECRET SERVICE FREQUENTLY WORRIED ABOUT THE LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD.
THE PRESIDENT CLAIMED TO SUFFER **FIERCE MIGRAINES** UNLESS HE ENJOYED NEW BEDROOM CONQUESTS ON A REGULAR BASIS.
IN PRIVATE, THE SECRET SERVICE COMPLAINED BITTERLY ABOUT THEIR INABILITY TO PROTECT THE PRESIDENT DURING THESE **INTIMATE** MOMENTS.
ESPECIALLY FROM A ***BUXOM*** ENEMY AGENT.
IT WAS THE OLDEST ESPIONAGE TRICK IN THE BOOK.

HOUSTON, TEXAS. NOW.
THEY CALL IT THE *BADGER GAME.*
PUB
...DID SOME RUNWAY STUFF IN EUROPE FOR A WHILE, BUT THAT WAS JUST A WAY TO MAKE SOME DRINKING MONEY, YOU KNOW?
Uh-huh.
SO IMAGINE MY PARENTS' SURPRISE, SENDING ME OFF TO BOARDING SCHOOL, AND ME COMING BACK WITH A *PORTFOLIO!* I MEAN...
... IT'S ALL SO *UNREAL.* BUT YOU'VE PROBABLY HAD LOTS OF GIRLFRIENDS WHO HAVE--
SORRY, WILL YOU EXCUSE ME FOR A MINUTE?
BE RIGHT BACK.

NICK CRANE SHOULD BE HAVING A GOOD TIME.
HE'S AT THE HOTTEST NIGHTCLUB IN HOUSTON, SIPPING COCKTAILS WITH A RAVISHING BLONDE WHO'S DETERMINED TO GO HOME WITH HIM.
BODYGUARDS OR NOT.
BUT HE'S NOT HAVING A GOOD TIME.
NOBODY CARES. NOBODY LISTENS...
HEY-- YOU OKAY, BUDDY?
YEAH. PEACHY.
OKAY THEN.
KLAK
WHAT THE HELL...?

LISTEN CAREFULLY. THE BLONDE OUTSIDE? THE ONE WHO WAS ALL OVER YOU? SHE'S HERE TO *KILL YOU.*
--THE HELL?
NOW DO EXACTLY AS I SAY...
Oh, I'M SORRY... IS THERE A LINE?
WHUMP
THUK
KRAK
I *HATE* WAITING IN LINE.

Hmmm. WELL *THAT'S* DISAPPOINTING.
rattle rattle
whrreeeeeeee
NICK, COME WITH ME *NOW.* YOUR LIFE IS IN DANGER.

Um...
DON'T LOOK AT THE STALL DOOR, NICK.
DON'T LOOK AT THE DOOR.
DAMNIT.
HEE-YAHHH!
MY OPPONENT IS GOOD.
EVERY PARRY AND BLOW SEEMS HARD-WIRED INTO HER CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM--LIKE SHE'S NOT EVEN THINKING ABOUT IT.

BUT SOMEONE COULD WALK IN AT ANY MOMENT--MAKING THIS MORE COMPLICATED THAN IT HAD TO BE.
ENOUGH DANCING. I NEED TO FINISH THIS QUICKLY.
NEED TO GET NICK CRANE OUT OF HERE AND INTO HIDING.
NICK! GET TO YOUR CAR!
NOW!

NICK HESITATES, NOT SURE WHO TO BELIEVE-- THE **HOT BLONDE,** OR THE **DUDE FROM TWO URINALS DOWN?**
I'LL GO GET HELP--
NO, NICK... ***WAIT!***
I THINK YOU'D BETTER TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THIS ***MAN'S*** FACE.

MY NAME IS NATALIA ROMANOVA.
A.K.A. BLACK WIDOW. SUPER HERO. SPY. AVENGER.
I'M HERE TO SAVE THIS BOY FROM ABDUCTION, TORTURE, AND AN ANONYMOUS BURIAL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TEXAS DESERT.
BUT THAT'S GOING TO BE DIFFICULT, NOW THAT HE'S SEEN MY FACE.
BLACK WIDOW IN...
KISS OR KILL

TURN AROUND AND RUN--
KRESSH
NICK, LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY.
MY GOD...IT'S *YOU.*
"I'VE STARED AT YOUR FACE FOR HOURS.
"STARED AT YOU AND ***HATED YOU*** WITH EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING."

THEN YOU WON'T MIND IF I DO THIS.
THERE'S NO TIME TO BLOCK THE BLOW--I CAN ONLY GUIDE IT TO ANOTHER PART OF MY BODY.
BETTER SHOULDER MUSCLE THAN A LUNG.
C'MON. WE NEED TO GET YOU SOMEWHERE SAFE.

YOU STILL BUY AMERICAN, huh? I'LL LET YOU DRIVE. I'VE GOT TO CHANGE.
OKAY, MS. "COLLEGE STUDENT-TURNED-SUPERMODEL." WHO THE HELL ARE YOU, ***REALLY?***
AND HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT ***PSYCHO*** WAS COMING FOR--
Oh. SORRY.
IT'S FINE, NICK.
AS FOR THE FIRST QUESTION, MY EMPLOYERS CALL ME ***FATALE.***
AND THE SECOND QUESTION--LOOK, YOU WROTE AN ARTICLE IMPLICATING THAT WOMAN IN THE ***DEATH OF YOUR FATHER.***
WHAT DID YOU THINK SHE'D DO? SEND A ***BOTTLE OF WINE*** AND ***SOME FLOWERS?***

WASHINGTON, D.C. SIX MONTHS EARLIER.
THE MEDIA ADORED VICE-PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL WHIT CRANE. HE WAS HANDSOME, BRIGHT, AND CONSIDERED SCANDALPROOF.
THAT IS, UNTIL ONE GOSSIP COLUMNIST MADE A SNARKY COMMENT ABOUT THE SENATOR SLIPPING AWAY WITH ONE OF HIS CONSULTANTS.
CRANE'S HANDLERS EXPLAINED HER AWAY AS A "FREELANCE SOCIAL MEDIA CONSULTANT," NOTHING MORE.
REC
THEY STRESSED THAT THE SENATOR WAS UTTERLY DEVOTED TO HIS WIFE LAURA, SON NICK, AND DAUGHTER JULIE.
THEY BLASTED THE ACCUSATIONS AS "BASELESS, TASTELESS, AND RIDICULOUS."
BUT THAT ONLY MADE THE TABLOIDS REDOUBLE THEIR EFFORTS TO REVEAL THE IDENTITY OF THIS MYSTERIOUS "WOMAN IN BLACK."

A WEEK LATER, CRANE DROPPED OUT OF THE RACE. NO EXPLANATION, OTHER THAN THE USUAL:
"I JUST WANT TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH MY FAMILY."
THE NEXT DAY, SENATOR WHIT CRANE TOOK HIS OWN LIFE.
AND THAT NIGHT, NICK CRANE SWORE TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH.

JUST OUTSIDE HOUSTON. NOW.
AND HE WOULD. TONIGHT. IF HE MANAGED TO LIVE THROUGH THE NEXT FIVE MINUTES...
HOW DO *YOU* KNOW ABOUT THE STORY? I HAVEN'T SHOWN IT TO ANYBODY YET--
THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT *SHE* KNOWS. AND SHE WANTS NOTHING MORE THAN TO STAY HIDDEN IN THE SHADOWS.
I KNOW I SHOULD BE *SCARED* OR SOMETHING...BUT IN A STRANGE WAY, I'M RELIEVED.
"FINALLY, I HAVE CONFIRMATION THAT SHE'S *REAL.* NOBODY BELIEVED ME. NOT EVEN MY FRIENDS."
"Oh, SHE'S *REAL* ALL RIGHT. REAL AND AS *DEADLY* AS THEY COME."
NOW LISTEN CLOSELY, NICK, BECAUSE THIS IS IMPORTANT. I KNOW YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE THIS.
BUT IF I'M GOING TO SAVE YOUR LIFE, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO KNOW YOUR *SOURCE.*

NO.
I'M SORRY-- I MEAN, I THINK YOU JUST SAVED MY LIFE BACK THERE...BUT YOU'RE STILL A *TOTAL STRANGER.*
I GET IT. YOU'D SOONER GO TO JAIL THAN GIVE UP YOUR SOURCES.
WELL... YEAH.
SHINK
I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT JAIL, NICK. I'M TALKING ABOUT YOUR *LIFE.*
YOU HAVE FIFTEEN SECONDS TO TELL ME A NAME OR THIS GOES INTO YOUR EYE.
GAH!
Y-YOU *CAN'T--*
YOU CAN'T *DO THIS.* IF I CRASH, WE'LL BOTH DIE!
DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH BLOOD CAN JET OUT OF A *CENTRAL RETINAL ARTERY?*

YOU CLAIM YOU CAN TRACE THIS "WOMAN IN BLACK" TO THREE OTHER DEAD POLITICAL LEADERS.
THIS IS INSANE...*YOU'RE* INSANE...
YOU ALLEGE THAT ALL FOUR, INCLUDING YOUR FATHER, WERE SEEN IN THE COMPANY OF THE SAME *MYSTERY WOMAN* IN THE WEEKS BEFORE THEIR DEATHS.
PLEASE LISTEN TO ME--
YOU ALSO MENTION A *DEEP BACKGROUND SOURCE* WHO HELPED YOU CONNECT THE DEATHS.
DAMN IT, WILL YOU STOP AND...
HEY!
TWO SECONDS TO TELL ME THE NAME OF THIS *"SOURCE."*

DIDN'T YOU EVER LEARN THAT *NO* MEANS *NO?*
I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING NICK'S TRAIL FOR WEEKS NOW. HE'S A TOUGH, RESOURCEFUL KID. COMES FROM MONEY, BUT DOESN'T ACT LIKE IT.
I JUST NEED HIM TO **HOLD IT TOGETHER** FOR THE NEXT TEN SECONDS...

HOUSTON, TEXAS. ONE MONTH AGO.
FIVE MONTHS AFTER HIS FATHER'S DEATH, NICK CRANE--WHO'D BEEN A JOURNALISM MAJOR--LANDED A JOB AT A SMALL HOUSTON DAILY.
THE HELL'S THIS?
NOTHING...
BUT NICK WASN'T THERE FOR THE PAYCHECK. HE WAS THERE FOR THE CREDENTIALS, THE ACCESS.
THIS IS ABOUT YOUR FATHER, ISN'T IT? YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE DOING THIS!
IT'S PRIVATE.
ONCE THE OTHER PAPERS CAUGHT WIND OF NICK'S CRUSADE, THEY WERE MERCILESS.
TO THEM, THIS WAS LIKE JFK JR. INVESTIGATING NOVEMBER 22, 1963. OR JULIE NIXON LOOKING INTO WATERGATE.
BUT NICK WAS ONTO SOMETHING REAL. AND HIS MYSTERY WOMAN HAD BEEN KNOCKING OUT KEY POLITICAL PLAYERS AROUND THE GLOBE...DISGUISED AS ME.
SO I SHADOWED NICK TO SEE IF MY BODY DOUBLE WOULD EMERGE.
NOBODY--NOT THE AVENGERS, NOT EVEN S.H.I.E.L.D., WHEN IT WAS STILL OPERATIONAL--KNEW WHO CONTROLLED HER.

I-45. NOW.
FATALE, OF COURSE, DID NOT DISAPPOINT.
SHE WAS ONE VICIOUS BADGER, ESPECIALLY WHEN CORNERED.
KRAK
<ENOUGH OF THIS.>*
*TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN.

<AGREED.>
<IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO GO.>
THE BADGER GAME IS SIMPLE. LET THE PRETTY WOMAN DISTRACT YOU...
<YOU BITCH-->
...WHILE THE REAL DANGER SNEAKS UP FROM THE SIDE.
THE BRAKES! *NOW!*

SKREEEE
WAIT-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SAY HELLO TO MY *FATHER.*
NICK, SHE LIED TO YOU, I'M NOT--
BLAM

BLACK WIDOW 7

"KISS OR KILL, PART 2"

"Poland is the 51st state. Americans have no idea." --James L. Pavitt, former director of the CIA's clandestine service
IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING 9/11, THE UNITED STATES OFTEN SENT CAPTURED LEADERS OF AL QAEDA TO SECRET BLACK SITES IN **POLAND.**
THE CHOICE WAS NOT RANDOM. IN POLAND, THERE ARE VERY FEW TIES TO ISLAMIC CULTURE--MAKING RESCUE BY LOCAL AL QAEDA MEMBERS HIGHLY UNLIKELY.
IT WAS LIKE BEING HELD IN THE MIDDLE OF **NOWHERE.**
OUT OF REACH.
TOTALLY AT THE MERCY OF YOUR CAPTORS...

ROANOKE, VIRGINIA. NOW.
NICK CRANE'S BEEN STIRRING FOR A MINUTE OR SO. ANY SECOND NOW HE'S GOING TO...
...WAKE UP.
W-huh... WHAT THE--
ANGRY. WET. CONFUSED.
HEY! WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?
Oh, COME ON... UNLOCK ME, DAMNIT! RIGHT NOW!
THE LAST THING NICK CRANE REMEMBERS, HE'D JUST SHOT THE PERSON HE BLAMES FOR HIS FATHER'S DEATH.
ME.
ARE YOU FINISHED YET? GET IT ALL OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM?

NO.
WHY DOES MY *HEAD* HURT SO MUCH?
"WELL, YOU TRIED TO SHOOT ME IN THE FACE.
"SO I GAVE YOU A LITTLE *KISS.*"
"A WHAT?"
I CALL IT A *WIDOW'S KISS.* INSTANT KNOCK-OUT DRUG, PIONEERED BY RUSSIAN SPETSNAZ.
I CAN GIVE YOU ANOTHER HIT IF IT'LL HELP CALM YOU DOWN.
IS THAT WHY I'M ALL WET?
NO. YOU'RE WET BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN OUT FOR TWENTY HOURS, AND I NEED YOU TO BE AWAKE AND MOVING.
THAT IS, IF YOU WANT TO STAY *ALIVE.*

TWENTY *HOURS?* WHAT DAY IS IT? WHERE ARE WE?
FULL OF QUESTIONS, AREN'T YOU, NICK? IT'S TUESDAY. WE'RE IN ROANOKE, VIRGINIA. I DROVE US HERE NONSTOP FROM HOUSTON.
THAT ABOUT DO IT?
GOOD. NOW IT'S *YOUR TURN.*
SKRASH
NICK CRANE IS THE ONLY LINK TO THE ORGANIZATION THAT'S BEEN TAKING OUT MONEYMEN AND POLITICAL PLAYERS AROUND THE WORLD-- AND TRYING TO FRAME ME FOR THE MURDERS.
BUT NICK REFUSES TO GIVE UP THE NAME OF HIS SOURCE.
WHO'S YOUR *SOURCE?*
YOU TOO, huh?
WHY DON'T YOU JUST *TORTURE ME* FOR IT--LIKE YOUR CRAZY BLONDE FRIEND!?

REQUESTS TO BE TORTURED-- EVEN SARCASTIC ONES-- USUALLY SIGNAL DEEP-SEATED DESIRES.
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO TORTURE YOU?
NO...
HE PRETENDS TO BE REPULSED BY ME, BUT HE CAN'T STOP LOOKING.
STILL, I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO SWEET-TALK THE SOURCE OUT OF HIM. HE'S TOO STUBBORN.
ONE FINAL CHANCE. GIVE ME A NAME, OR IT'S **PLAN B.**
Uh-uh.
NO WAY.
NOT FOR **ANYTHING.**
I HAVE TO ADMIT-- THERE'S SOMETHING ADMIRABLE ABOUT HIS REFUSAL.
NICK CRANE, IDEALISTIC YOUNG JOURNALIST, WANTS TO DO THE **RIGHT THING.**

KRESH
GAHH!
THE POOR, DELUDED KID.

STOP! YOU CAN'T *DO THIS!*
DON'T YOU KNOW *WHO I AM!?*
THEY *KNOW,* NICK.
JUST GO WITH IT. OTHERWISE THEY'LL BREAK A BONE TO MAKE YOU COMPLY.
NO...
YOU SONS OF BI--

RESTRICTED AIRSPACE NEAR [REDACTED] OVER THE ATLANTIC OCEAN.
SOMETIMES, THE FASTEST WAY OUT OF A COUNTRY IS TO HITCH A RIDE ON A CIA-RUN "TORTURE TAXI."
OF COURSE, THEY DON'T LIKE IT WHEN YOU CALL IT THAT.
THEY FLY ANYWHERE AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE. AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO PAY EXTRA FOR A PILLOW OR A BAG OF PEANUTS.
Nuh-wha-ha?
NICK'S PROBABLY ASKING WHERE WE'RE GOING. I SUPPOSE HE'S HAD ENOUGH ALONE TIME UNDER THERE.
GASP GASP

D-DON'T WORRY--EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE OKAY. I KNOW W-WHO TO CALL.
Oh, DO YOU?
MY DAD MADE ME MEMORIZE THE NAME AND NUMBER IN CASE SOMETHING CRAZY EVER HAPPENED ON SPRING BREAK IN A FORIEGN COUNTRY. ONE PHONE CALL AND THE *DIPLOMATIC WHEELS START TO TURN.*
DO YOU REALLY THINK THEY'LL HAVE A PHONE WHERE WE'RE GOING?
Uh...
THE ONLY WAY I CAN HELP US OUT OF THIS MESS IS TO KNOW *WHO* WE'RE DEALING WITH.
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?
THAT NAME MAY BE THE ONLY THING KEEPING US *ALIVE.*
ALAS, HE'S NOT GOING TO MAKE THIS EASY.

SEVENTY MILES NORTH OF WARSAW, POLAND.
YOU CAN'T D-D-DO THIS!
<SHUT UP.>
WHAT DID HE SAY?
"SHUT UP."
HEY, DON'T GET MAD AT ME. I WAS ONLY ASK--
I DON'T BELIEVE IN TORTURE.
AHHH!
TOO MESSY, AND THERE'S NO GUARANTEE THE INFO WILL BE RELIABLE.
FORCIBLE DETAINMENT, HOWEVER, GOES A LONG, LONG WAY.
Um... MISS?
Oh GOD, PLEASE DON'T BE DEAD...
WHICH IS WHY I SET UP "PLAN B." I ASKED THE CIA OPERATIVE WHO RUNS THIS **QUAINT LITTLE HELL-HOLE** TO GIVE ME A LITTLE QUIET TIME WITH NICK.

CAN'T BELIEVE I CAN STAND TO LOOK AT YOU.
I SHOULD HATE YOU.
FOR WHAT YOU DID TO MY FATHER.
HATE YOU...
FWOOSH
OKAY, GETTING SOAKED FLASHDANCE STYLE WASN'T PART OF THE "PLAN B" SCRIPT.

DON'T WORRY...I CAN GET US OUT OF THIS...
HE KEEPS SAYING THAT, BUT IT'S THE FURTHEST THING FROM THE TRUTH.
WE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE **LEFT ALONE.** I HAD A SIGNAL PRE-ARRANGED WITH **AGENT MITCHRONEY**--MY CONTACT HERE AT THIS CIA-RUN BLACK SITE.
SO I HAD NO IDEA WHAT **THIS** WAS ALL ABOUT.
NICE ONE, NATASHA. REALLY. I'M KIND OF STUNNED BY THE AUDACITY.

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS, KEN? YOU WANTED A DATE, YOU COULD HAVE JUST CALLED.
AND IF YOU WANTED TO HIDE FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, THEN YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T HAVE PICKED A SECRET FACILITY *RUN* BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.
THOUGH I HAVE TO ADMIT, YOU'VE GOT HUGE ONES FOR TRYING.
HIDING?
PLEASE. IT'S ALL OVER THE NEWS, NATASHA--YOU AND YOUR BOYFRIEND THERE, WANTED FOR THE MURDER OF SENATOR WHIT CRANE.
WAIT--YOU PEOPLE THINK I *KILLED MY OWN FATHER?!*
WHO GAVE YOU THE DETAINMENT ORDER?
IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL. YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU.
SO KEEP THAT IN MIND OVER THE NEXT FEW HOURS, OKAY?

Fuh-*TUH*
...Eh?
HERE'S THE PROBLEM WITH BLACK SITE BUREAUCRATS LIKE KEN MITCHRONEY.
THEY'RE USED TO WORKING WITH BROKEN, SCARED SOULS.
KRAK
SHUK

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
THEY FORGET HOW TO DEAL WITH SOMEONE WHO ACTUALLY PUTS UP A FIGHT.
THIS WAY.
...ARE YOU SPEAKING? BECAUSE I CAN'T HEAR A THING.
COME ON, WE DON'T HAVE MU--
IF YOU'RE SPEAKING I SERIOUSLY CAN'T HEAR YOU BECAUSE YOU FIRED THAT FRIGGIN' GUN RIGHT--
--NEXT TO MY HEAD!!!
NOW, THE FREELANCE MERCS WHO GUARD THESE BLACK SITES... THEY'RE ANOTHER STORY.

POK
POK
POK
POK
THEY'RE PAID AN OBSCENE AMOUNT OF MONEY TO BE BORED OUT OF THEIR MINDS.
SO ANY EXCUSE TO POP OFF THEIR PAYLOADS? THEY TAKE IT.
PANG
PANG
PANG
YOU DON'T WANT TO PLAY AROUND WITH GUYS LIKE THESE.
YOU WANT TO LET THEM GO BACK TO BEING BORED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

SO...
WAS THAT ONE OF THOSE "WIDOW'S KISS" THINGS YOU USED ON ME?
NO.
IT'S CALLED A WIDOW'S BITE. PERCUSSIVE ENERGY BLASTS. THESE GUYS ARE GOING TO FEEL IT FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT MONTH.
SCHOW
KISS... BITE...
YOU'VE GOT THIS WHOLE ORAL THING GOING ON, DON'T YOU?
PART OF ME WANTS TO NUDGE HIM OFF THE BACK OF THIS SNOWMOBILE.

FOUR HOURS LATER. BYDGOSZCZ, POLAND, 141 MILES NORTHEAST OF WARSAW.
"<WHAT IS IT WITH YOU PEOPLE?>"
<YOU PEOPLE?>
<YEAH, YOU *SPOOKS*... EVERYBODY'S TRYING TO DISAPPEAR RIGHT NOW. CHANGING THEIR NAMES, THEIR FACES.>
FRYDERYK THE FIXER HAS BEEN SUPPLYING FALSE IDENTIFICATIONS SINCE BEFORE THE FALL OF THE WALL.
<DON'T GET ME WRONG. I LOVE THE MONEY. BUT I'M RUNNING OUT OF NEW IDENTITIES AND PASSPORTS.>
<SURELY YOU HAVE SOMETHING LEFT FOR ME?>
<*ALWAYS* FOR YOU, MY DEAR. YOUR NEW BOYFRIEND, HOWEVER...I DON'T KNOW.>
<HE'S KIND OF *NOTORIOUS* NOW.>
HAWK
Huh?

BYDGOSZCZ POLRAIL STATION.
<...AND AN UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE COMPANION ARE WANTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEATH OF VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE...>
WHAT'S SHE SAYING? MY POLISH IS A LITTLE RUSTY...
WE'RE WANTED FOR MURDER.
GREAT--SO WE'RE INTERNATIONAL FUGITIVES NOW?
RELAX.
RELAX?
WE'RE NOT OURSELVES ANYMORE, THANKS TO FRYDERYK. UNLESS YOU DO SOMETHING STUPID, LIKE PANIC.
CAN I ASK WHY WE'RE HEADED TO WARSAW?
FATALE--YOUR ***BLONDE FRIEND***--USES THE CITY AS A HOME BASE. MAYBE I CAN FOLLOW HER TRAIL BACK TO HER EMPLOYER.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS CRAP?

FATALE LEFT HER PURSE IN THE CAR. IT'S A BREADCRUMB. ALMOST EVERYONE LEAVES BREADCRUMBS.
MOST OF THE TIME, THE TRICK IS KNOWING HOW TO CONNECT THE BREADCRUMBS.
YOU EVER THINK ABOUT BECOMING A JOURNALIST?
ISN'T JOURNALISM DEAD?
YOUR NAME IS NATASHA, ISN'T IT? I HEARD THE GUY IN THE SCARY PRISON TORTURE CAMP CALL YOU THAT.
IT'S A *BEAUTIFUL* NAME.
OKAY, LISTEN...I KNOW I SHOULDN'T TELL YOU THIS, BUT...
AND THEN IT FINALLY HAPPENS.

BA-BOOM
HOLD ON!
ZZKT
ZZKZZKT
SCREEE
THE TRUE PLAYERS EMERGE.

FANTASMA...
...AND CRIMSON DYNAMO.
Oh GOD, PLEASE TELL ME THESE PEOPLE ARE FRIENDS OF YOURS...
THESE ARE NOT MY FRIENDS.
BUT WE GO *WAY BACK*...

BLACK WIDOW 8

"KISS OR KILL, PART 3"

PICCADILLY
PUBLIC SUBWAY
"MAY GOD FORGIVE YOU FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE, NOT ONLY TO ME BUT BELOVED RUSSIA AND ITS PEOPLE."
THOSE WERE THE LAST WORDS OF A FORMER OFFICER OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERAL SECURITY SERVICE WHO HAD GONE INTO EXILE IN LONDON.
LATER, AUTHORITIES DETERMINED HE HAD BEEN POISONED BY A DOSE OF **POLONIUM-210**, A HIGHLY RADIOACTIVE METALLOID.
SINCE POLONIUM DOESN'T EMIT GAMMA RAYS, IT IS INVISIBLE TO MOST RADIATION SENSORS.
THE FORMER SPOOK-- WHO SOME CONSIDERED A TRAITOR--HAD BEEN GIVEN **200 TIMES THE LETHAL DOSE.**
IN SHORT, A CASE OF **OVERKILL.**

OUTSIDE WARSAW, POLAND, NOW.
FRIENDS OF YOURS?
WE GO WAY BACK.
BUT I'M HALF-LYING TO NICK.
WHILE I DO KNOW THE **CRIMSON DYNAMO** AND **FANTASMA** IDENTITIES, I DON'T KNOW THE PEOPLE CURRENTLY BEHIND THEM.
BEST TO FIGURE THAT OUT LATER.
GO!
IT'S GOING TO BE HARD ENOUGH TO KEEP NICK ALIVE WHILE NEUTRALIZING THESE TWO.

Oh GOD, THAT GIANT ROBOT THING IS--
DON'T LOOK BACK. KEEP MOVING.
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
JUMPING OFF THE TRAIN WOULD MAKE US EASY TARGETS. HIDING IS USELESS WHEN YOUR PURSUER HAS THERMAL VISION.
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY OUT.
YOU SAID KEEP MOVING! WHY THE HELL ARE YOU STOPPING?
FOLLOW ME--AND ONLY TOUCH WHAT I TOUCH.
FOLLOW YOU AND...WAIT, WHAT!?
ZZZT ZZZT
NO.
NO, NO NO...

THIS IS CRAZY... YOU'RE CRAZY... *I'M CRAZY...*
THE SAME DIESEL TRAINS HAVE BEEN IN SERVICE ALONG THE WARSAW CORRIDOR FOR DECADES NOW.
I KNOW THEM BETTER THAN I SHOULD ADMIT.
I KNOW THEIR STRUCTURAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES.
THEIR MOTOR AND ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS.
HOOM
HOOM
I ALSO KNOW THIS FLOOR CAN'T WITHSTAND TOO MANY MORE **DIRECT REPULSOR BLASTS.**

WHICH IS WHAT I'M *COUNTING ON.*
<HE SAID YOU WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO KILL.>
<BUT YOU ARE *NOTHING.*>*
*TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN.
HOLD ME UP.
GOT YOU.
WHZZZZZZZ

<YOU EXPECT THIS TO STOP *ME?*>
ACTUALLY, I DON'T.
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
THOOM
THOOMM
THOOM

BUT IT HELPS COMPLETE THE CIRCUIT.
AAACH!

GOOD WORK.
WHAT?
I'M SORRY, I DON'T SEEM TO BE HEARING VERY WELL RIGHT NOW, BECAUSE SOME *CRAZY WOMAN* JUST SET OFF *BOMBS* WHILE WE WERE *HANGING UNDER A TRAIN WRECK*--
GO ON, DRAMA QUEEN.
<Tsk tsk, WIDOW.>
<YOU SHOULD TAKE MORE CARE WITH EXPLOSIVES.>

Oh.. Oh GOD... WHAT HAPPENED TO THESE PEOPLE?!
DON'T BELIEVE YOUR EYES. WHAT YOU'RE SEEING ISN'T REAL.
I KNOW THAT'S NOT EASY.
FANTASMA'S ILLUSIONS CAN SEEM MORE REAL THAN REALITY.
THE PAIN FEELING MORE INTENSE THAN ACTUAL PAIN...
AND THEN...

Whoa.
...IT DISAPPEARS.
DID...
DID YOU DO THAT?
WE NEED TO TALK.
IT WAS FATALE. THE VERY WOMAN WHO'D BEEN TRYING TO KILL NICK JUST A FEW DAYS AGO.
THE FACT THAT SHE'D JUST SAVED OUR LIVES MEANT ONE THING: WE HAD A COMMON ENEMY.

WARSAW.
A SHORT WHILE AND ONE STOLEN PATROL VEHICLE LATER, WE REACH THE CITY. THE MOKROWSKI IS A PRE-WAR HOTEL, ONCE GRAND, NOW HOME TO TRANSIENTS AND OTHER SHADOWY TYPES.
IT SUITS OUR NEEDS PERFECTLY.
HOTEL
YOU KNOW WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE, DON'T YOU GUYS?
Uh-huh.
KIND OF LIKE A MENAGE A TROIS...
YEAH, WE GET IT.
I SWEEP THE ROOM FOR BUGS AS FATALE BEGINS TO EXPLAIN.
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING. YES, I WAS HIRED TO SEDUCE YOUR FATHER, AND I WAS TO APPEAR AS THE WIDOW HERE.
BUT I DID NOT KILL HIM.
HE DIED BY HIS OWN HAND. YOU SAW THAT.
MY FATHER WOULDN'T DO THAT!

WHY GO AFTER *THE BOY,* THEN?
BOY?
I WAS HIRED THROUGH MY *CUTOUT,* AS USUAL.
"BUT WHEN I FOUND HIM DEAD, SUDDENLY I HAD NO WAY OF REACHING THE CLIENT.
"THE ONLY WAY WAS THROUGH MR. CRANE'S OH-SO MYSTERIOUS *SOURCE."*
I DON'T DO FREEBIES.
MY EMPLOYER NEEDS TO PAY UP.
YEAH. PAID FOR *RUINING MY FATHER'S LIFE.*

NO OFFENSE, BUT I DON'T THINK YOUR FATHER WAS THE PRIMARY TARGET. HE WAS MERELY A ***BONUS.***
AGREED.
SOMEONE WANTED TO SET THE TWO OF US ON A COLLISION COURSE.
AND WHEN THAT DIDN'T WORK, THEY SENT IN A CRIMSON DYNAMO AND A FANTASMA TO ***CLEAN THINGS UP.***
I KNOW THIS GOES AGAINST EVERYTHING I BELIEVE IN...BUT I DON'T KNOW ***WHAT TO BELIEVE*** ANYMORE.
MY SOURCE CLAIMS TO BE A FORMER MEMBER OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERAL SECURITY SERVICE. HE CALLS HIMSELF ***"SADKO."***
HE TOLD ME THAT MY FATHER'S DEATH WAS JUST A PIECE OF A LARGER CONSPIRACY.
HOW DO YOU REACH HIM?

"ALL I HAVE IS A CELL NUMBER."
BURGAS, BULGARIA.
WE TRACED THE NUMBER TO A BLACK SEA RESORT TOWN FAVORED BY FORMER SOVIET INTELLIGENCE AND EUROPEAN WHITE SLAVERS.
THE PERSON BEHIND "SADKO'S" CELL NUMBER OWNED THE TOP FLOOR OF THE LARGEST CONDOMINIUM IN TOWN. NO DOUBT A FRONT. STILL, IT WAS ANOTHER BREADCRUMB TO FOLLOW.
I SHOULD PROBABLY COME ALONG WITH YOU GUYS... RIGHT?
BUT I'LL PROBABLY NEED, LIKE, A TASER OR SOMETHING. OR MAYBE SOME OF THOSE EXPLODING MARBLES...
I NEED YOU NEARBY, DOING SURVEILLANCE. YOU SEE ANYTHING STRANGE, YOU TEXT ME.
TEXT YOU. I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR REAL NAME.

"IT'S NATALIA."
CAMERA E-3
CAMERA E-5
PING
PING
Natalia Romanoff (A.K.A. Black Widow)
Kate Horsley (a.k.a. Fatale)
1:28
CAMERA E-7
CAMERA L-3
0:47
CAMERA P-2
0:04

YES, MY FATHER WAS TARGETED AND SEDUCED. BUT HE ALSO GAVE IN. HE MADE THE CHOICE.
I WOULD HAVE SEEN THAT EARLIER, IF I DIDN'T HAVE LITTLE BOY BLINDERS ON. IT'S EASY TO SIT IN JUDGMENT WHEN YOU HAVEN'T FACED REAL TEMPTATION.
AND THEN MY PHONE WENT OFF.
SADKO:
YOU SEND THEM TO ME?
Oh #$%@.
SADKO:
THANK U

Oh GOD.
NATALIA...
FOR THE SECOND TIME IN MY SHORT LIFE, I WATCHED THE WORLD DIE.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHO TO CALL, WHERE TO GO. I FELT AS LOST AS WHEN I FOUND MY FATHER'S BODY.
ONLY THIS TIME, I WAS RESPONSIBLE. I HAD DONE THIS!
AND THEN MY PHONE WENT OFF AGAIN.

KEEP FOLLOWING THOSE BREADCRUMBS.
-N
AND THEN I KNEW EVERYTHING WAS GOING TO BE OKAY.
MR. CRANE...
Huh--?
MY SOURCE EVEN ARRANGED FOR MY **RIDE HOME.**

HOUSTON, TX. SEVENTEEN HOURS LATER.
ABOUT THAT SOURCE: I WON'T REVEAL HER NAME. EVER.
BUT SHE MEANS MORE TO ME THAN SHE'LL EVER KNOW. SHE HELPED ME SEE THE TRUTH.
MY FATHER, WHIT CRANE, WAS A UNITED STATES SENATOR.
BUT HE WAS ALSO A FLAWED MAN.
WE WERE MORE ALIKE THAN I REALIZED.

SIBERIA.
ONE MONTH LATER.
ALL OF THIS TIME, AND STILL NO CLOSER TO THE ANSWER.
WE KNEW WE WERE WALKING INTO A DEATH TRAP IN BULGARIA. EVERYTHING HAD BEEN ORCHESTRATED FOR OUR ARRIVAL-- INCLUDING ENOUGH C-4 TO TAKE DOWN THE ENTIRE BUILDING.
SO WE LEFT THE PARTY EARLY.
BETTER IF THE WORLD BELIEVES WE'RE DEAD.
NOW I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN TRUST FATALE-- OR, "KATE." I SUSPECT SHE MAY NOT BE TELLING ME EVERYTHING.
BUT FOR NOW, THE OLD RULE APPLIES: THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND.
BUT WHO EXACTLY IS THE ENEMY?

FIVE MILES SOUTH OF YAKSUK, SAKHA REPUBLIC, RUSSIA.
TWO THOUSAND, SEVEN HUNDRED METERS BELOW THE SURFACE.
<CHECKING HALL 19. THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING...>
SWSSHHH
ULK
<YES. YOU DID HEAR SOMETHING.>
<THE BEGINNING OF THE END.>

ITURUP, SOUTH KURIL ISLANDS.
ONE OF FOUR DISPUTED ISLANDS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND JAPAN.
<LANDING ZONE IN TWO MINUTES, DEPUTY CHIEF.>*
SPACIBA, MIKHAIL.
<YES, GENERAL, I AM AWARE OF THE SITUATION AND AM ON MY WAY TO ADDRESS IT WITH AMBASSADOR MASUDA NOW.>
*TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN.
CURRENTLY OCCUPIED BY JAPAN.
<I ASSURE YOU, I WON'T ALLOW THE THREAT TO OUR BORDERS TO GROW.>
<THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING NEXT WEEK WITH THE PRIME MINISTER WILL HAVE NO SURPRISES.>
JAPANESE BORDER OUTPOST, THREE DAYS AGO.
<MASUDA HAS BEEN COOPERATIVE DURING THE RECENT TALKS. I HAVE REASON TO THINK HE CAN BE TRUSTED TO TELL US THE TRUTH.>
<IF THE DARK OCEAN HAS REFORMED, HE WILL TELL ME. AND I WILL HANDLE RETRIBUTION.>
KONBANWA, AMBASSADOR MASUDA!
<DEPUTY CHIEF, HOLD YOUR POSITION, SIR. DO THEY LOOK... ODD TO YOU?>
LAST KNOWN LOCATION OF DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE BORDER SERVICE VIKTOR EGORAV, KGB.

AMBASSADOR?
<EVASIVE ACTION! FALL BACK AND SECURE THE DEPUTY CHIEF!>
KRSCH
<MY GOD! WHAT MONSTER DID THIS?!>
<SIR, RETREAT TO THE TRANSPORT! MIKHAIL, TAKE OFF AS SOON AS THE DEPUTY CHIEF IS ON BOARD!>
<YES, SI-- URK!>
SHUNK
GAAH!!
PFAFT
POMOGI!
<I CAN'T SEE ANY-- GUH!>
<DEPUTY CHIEF EGORAV, SIR! YOU MUST GET TO SAFETY!>
HURK!
SHUNK
ANDREI!

<YOU WISH TO SEE THE FACE OF THE MONSTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH TODAY?>
<YOU-->
<SPEAK RUSSIAN? QUITE WELL.>
<I *KILL* THEM EVEN BETTER.>
LET US TAKE OUR LEAVE.
LET THEIR BODIES ROT AND THEIR PEACE CRUMBLE BENEATH THE WAVES OF THE *DARK OCEAN.*
DEATH TOLL: 15.
CUMULATIVE DEATHS: 57 KNOWN.
AND CLIMBING.

NEW YORK CITY: TODAY.
CENTURY PLAZA SUITES. ACROSS FROM THE UNITED NATIONS BUILDING.
HOUSES VISITING HEADS OF STATE, FAMILY MEMBERS OF DELEGATES, AND THE SECRET SERVICE THAT PROTECTS THEM.
SPAK
OFF-THE-BOOKS SUMMIT FOR RUSSIAN AND JAPANESE RELATIONS SET TO TAKE PLACE IN TWO DAYS.
LAST KNOWN LOCATION OF JAPANESE SECURITY TEAM MEMBER MURI HA.
SHUNK
ANYTHING?
NOTHING ON INFRARED. IF THERE'S ANYONE IN THERE, THEY'RE NOT A WARM BODY ANYMORE.
NO NEED TO KNOCK THEN.

BARBARA MORSE, A.K.A. MOCKINGBIRD.
AVENGER, FORMER S.H.I.E.L.D. AGENT,
CURRENT LEADER OF WORLD COUNTERTERRORISM AGENCY.
CLINT BARTON, A.K.A. HAWKEYE.
AVENGER, WORLD'S GREATEST MARKSMAN.
CLEAR.
FOUND HIM.
AND HE WON'T NEED THE "DO NOT DISTURB" SIGN.
NO SIGN OF FORCED ENTRY.
NO BLOOD SPATTER EITHER. WHOEVER GOT HIM WAS CLOSE RANGE. WHICH MEANS OUR PAL HA HERE KNEW WHOEVER IT WAS THAT SHOT HIM IN THE BACK.
RECOGNIZE HIM?
UNFORTUNATELY... YEAH, I THINK I DO.

CONTROL, RUN THE PRINT I JUST UPLOADED AGAINST THE OLD S.H.I.E.L.D. DATABASE WE RECOVERED.
YOU GOT IT, BOSS.
THINKING THIS GUY USED TO BE S.H.I.E.L.D.?
IF HE WAS, IT WAS DEEP-COVER, WHICH MEANS SOMEONE HAS THEIR HANDS ON SOME PRETTY POWERFUL INTEL.
AND THEY'RE NOT AFRAID TO USE IT. WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS?
HE WAS KILLED STANDING UP. PUNCTURE WOUND TO THE NECK, SEVERED HIS CEREBRAL CORTEX.
LIKE THIS?
SHUNK
MORE LIKE A SHINOBI-ZU. THE UPWARD THRUST INDICATES IT WAS FROM A LONGER WEAPON THAN A SHORT DAGGER.
WHY WOULD A JAPANESE SECURITY MEMBER BE KILLED WITH AN OLD NINJA WEAPON?
TO SEND A MESSAGE.
CONTROL TO MOCKINGBIRD. YEAH, UM...WE HAVE A HIT. PRINTS MATCH A JASON HARASUMI.
JASON.
KNEW HIM?
TRAINED WITH HIM BACK IN S.H.I.E.L.D. ANAGRAM-BOY.
ALWAYS HAD TROUBLE WITH HIS COVERT NAMES, SO HE USED ANAGRAMS. HARASUMI, MURI HA.
SOMEONE IS KILLING SPIES AROUND THE WORLD, AND NOW THEY'VE KILLED A FRIEND OF MINE.

RUSSIAN K.G.B., JAPANESE SECRET SERVICE, EX-S.H.I.E.L.D., MI:5, MOSSAD, BLACK AIR. AND A BUNCH OF OTHER GROUPS I'VE NEVER HEARD OF.
ALL TARGETS OR DEAD.
YOU'RE ON THAT LIST, TOO.
THAT WHY YOU CAME BACK?
THERE'S A MAJOR PEACE TREATY HAPPENING RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET IN A COUPLE OF DAYS. SO FAR, IT'S ESCALATING, WITH EVERY SIGN POINTING TO SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T WANT PEACE, LOVE, AND HAPPINESS.
ROGERS* DOESN'T WANT THIS BLOWING UP INTO AN INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT.
SO HE NEEDS A SPY GROUP TO TAKE DOWN A SPY KILLER.
HE ALSO SENDS YOU BACK TO MY TEAM DAYS AFTER YOU QUIT, AFTER YOU AND ME HAVE SPLIT UP.
*STEVE ROGERS, COMMANDER OF NATIONAL SECURITY. --AGENT BECKERMAN
AND YOU SAY IT'S NOT PERSONAL?
WHY ARE YOU ON THIS LIST?
UM, GUYS, YOU SHOULD HEAR THIS. IT'S A FEW DAYS OLD, BUT I PULLED IT OFF AN OLD S.H.I.E.L.D. ENCRYPTED LINE.
DEAD
DEAD
DEAD
DEAD
SOMEONE IN SO DEEP SHE MUST NOT'VE KNOWN THERE IS NO MORE S.H.I.E.L.D.

PLAY IT, TWITCHY.
HELLO? THIS IS AGENT 174, CODE IS FROSTBITE APPLE BOISE FIVER.
I'VE BEEN COMPROMISED. NOT JUST **ME**...EVERYTHING. THIS **WHOLE PLACE!** THEY KNOW WHO WE ARE. WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE!
THEY EVEN KNOW MY REAL NAME.
EVERYONE'S **DYING!** I DON'T RECOGNIZE THE OUTFIT BUT THEY'RE PROS. PARAMILITARY FOR SURE. I THINK THEY'RE--**URK...**
SOURCE OF THE CALL, TWITCH?
HACKING THROUGH NOW.
CLINT, CALL ROGERS. GIVE A STATUS UPDATE AND LET HIM HANDLE THE FALLOUT WHEN THE JAPANESE DELEGATE FINDS OUT AN EX-U.S. SPY WAS IN HIS SECURITY DETAIL.
TRACED THE CALL. SENDING YOU COORDINATES NOW.
I BET I KNOW WHERE SHE WAS CALLING FROM.
TWITCH, SEND A CLEANUP CREW TO REMOVE JASON'S BODY. HAVE DOMINIC MEET US HERE WITH TRANSPORT AND COLD WEATHER GEAR.
BUNDLE UP. WE'RE GOING TO RUSSIA.

WHICH ONE OF YOU SAID WE HAD THIS UNDER CONTROL?
12 HOURS LATER. 13:52 LOCAL TIME.
FIVE MILES SOUTH OF YAKUSK, SAKHA REPUBLIC, RUSSIA.
ALSO KNOWN AS THE COLDEST CITY ON EARTH.

THWAAANG
DON'T LOOK AT ME, DOMINIC! YOU'RE THE ONE THAT SAID "FLY LOW."
HEY, SIBERIA ISN'T KNOWN FOR HIGH TECH RADAR.
THEN MAYBE YOUR SNOWMOBILE WHEELIES ATTRACTED THE WRONG ATTENTION.
THESE AREN'T SIBERIAN GUARDS. DIFFERENT MARKINGS. WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT LOOK K.G.B.
COVER YOUR EYES. FIRE IN THE HOLE.
FRAAZZZZ
WHOEVER THEY ARE, THEY HATE US AS MUCH AS I HATE THIS COLD.
FORTUNATELY, MACHINES AND COLD DON'T DO SO WELL TOGETHER EITHER...
THAK
ESPECIALLY WITH A DASH OF WATER AT SUB-ICEMAN TEMPERATURES.

BLAM
BLAM
AW, MAN...
KRMP
SPAK
THIS WAS MY *NICE* SNOWMOBILE.
GUESS YOU GUYS NEVER GOT *RETURN OF THE JEDI*, HUH?
DO YOURSELF A FAVOR. WHEN YOU FINALLY GET MOVIES OUT HERE, ONLY WATCH THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY.

LOCATION OF THE CALL SHOULD BE ABOUT A HUNDRED YARDS AWAY, JUST OVER THAT NEXT RIDGE.
DOM, YOU GONNA TAKE ANY OF THESE GUYS OUT, OR JUST DRIVE LIKE AN *OLD LADY?*
OLD LADY MY *BUTT*...
HEY BOY SCOUT!
DOMINIC FORTUNE, SEEMINGLY AGELESS SOLDIER FOR HIRE.
BLAM
CAN YER OLD LADY DO *THIS?!*
SPANG
CHOOM
BOYS AND THEIR TOYS. HEADS UP, WE'RE HERE.
AH OF COURSE! IT MUST BE *THIS* MOUND OF ICE AND NOT THE 82 OTHER ONES WE PASSED ON THE WAY?
SHUT IT. YOU SURE WE GOT THEM ALL?

WRRRRRR
DAMMIT!
BRRRRZAT
OH, I'M SORRY. DID YOU WANT TO GET THAT?
NATASHA ROMANOFF, A.K.A. BLACK WIDOW. FORMER K.G.B., FORMER S.H.I.E.L.D., CURRENT SECRET AVENGER.

NATASHA.
CLINT. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
SAME AS YOU. WHICH MEANS I WAS RIGHT.
I'M SORRY FOR WHAT'S GOING DOWN.
ANOTHER EX, HUH? *AWKWARD.*
FORTUNE! BACK OFF!
WHAT'S IN THERE IS NOT GONNA BE PRETTY.
FORTUNE? DOMINIC FORTUNE?
ONE AND ONLY. CAN'T SAY THE SAME FOR YOU. RAN WITH A BLACK WIDOW ONCE, NOT LONG AGO. SHE WAS A BLONDE.
SHE WAS LUCKY. SHE GOT OUT OF HERE YEARS AGO.
AMAZING. THESE ARE OLD MINING TUNNELS FROM THE 17TH CENTURY, RIGHT? PRESERVED IN ICE.
THEY WERE. NOW THEY'RE *TOMBS.*
FOR THE PAST FEW DECADES THIS USED TO BE A TRAINING GROUND. COVERT OPS, OFF-THE-BOOKS K.G.B.
I WAS TRAINED IN ONE OF THESE PLACES.
THEY CALL THEM *"RED ROOMS."*

RED ROOM TRAINING FACILITY FOR BLACK WIDOW PROJECT. DEATH TOLL: 16. CUMULATIVE DEATHS: 79 KNOWN.
BUT NOT FOR THIS REASON.
EVERYONE--?
YES. I'VE SWEPT THE ENTIRE FACILITY.
HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?
I STILL HAVE SOURCES. JUST BECAUSE I'M AN AVENGER DOESN'T MEAN I'M NOT STILL IN THE GAME. YOU?
THERE WAS A FORMER S.H.I.E.L.D. AGENT STATIONED HERE.
CONVENIENT.

CARE TO ELABORATE? 'CUZ FROM WHERE I'M STANDING, THE ONLY ONE HERE WHO HAD AN ACTIVE GRUDGE AGAINST THESE PEOPLE IS *YOU.*
THESE THINGS CAN GET MESSY, SPIN OUT OF CONTROL.
YOU ARE LUCKY THERE'S BEEN ENOUGH BLOOD SPILLED IN THIS ROOM ALREADY.
IF YOU ARE SUGGESTING I COULD BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT, OR EVEN *CONDONE* THE MURDER OF THESE WOMEN, THEN YOU HAD BEST LEAVE WHILE YOU CAN STILL WALK.
STILL, YOU GOTTA WONDER...
WONDER *WHAT*, CLINT?
YOUR SOURCE CALLS OR TIPS YOU OFF, OURS DOES, TOO. YOU'RE ON THE KILL LIST, SAME WITH BOBBI.
KILL LIST?
SPIES ARE GETTING BUMPED ALL OVER. WE GOT A LIST A MILE LONG. BURNT SPIES.
HOW DID YOU ACQUIRE THIS LIST?
CODEBREAKER STUMBLED ON IT. WENT STRAIGHT TO STEVE.
SO, A "LUCKY BREAK" GAVE YOU THE INTEL ON ALL OF THE TARGETS? LIKE A LIST LEFT FOR SANTA.
AND YOU DIDN'T THINK TO QUESTION THE SOURCE?
WE TRACKED DOWN THIS PLACE--
YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE SOMEONE OTHER THAN STEVE ROGERS *WANTS* YOU HERE.
OTHERWISE, WHY MAKE A LIST, MUCH LESS LEAK IT, THAT INCLUDES YOUR *LADY LOVE* OVER THERE?
WE'RE NOT--
BREADCRUMBS LEFT FOR HANSEL AND GRETEL.

YOU SAID YOU SWEPT THE AREA? DID YOU FIND ANYTHING? SPECIFICALLY, ANY WEAPON OF JAPANESE ORIGIN?
AS A MATTER OF FACT, YES.
THESE PLACES HAVE LOTS OF HIDEY HOLES, USED FOR MANY DIFFERENT THINGS.
THUNK
BUT NOTHING LIKE THIS.
A KUSARIGAMA.
ANOTHER OLD NINJA WEAPON.
ANOTHER?
AN AMERICAN SPY SET UP AS A MEMBER OF THE JAPANESE DELEGATE'S SECURITY TEAM WAS KILLED LAST NIGHT WITH A SHINOBI-ZUE.
YOU SAW THE WEAPON?
NO, BUT I RECOGNIZED THE WOUND. AND NOW THIS.
HIDDEN IN A PLACE WHERE ONLY YOU COULD FIND IT. WHERE SOMEONE KNEW YOU WOULD LOOK.
BREADCRUMBS, HUH?
HOW WELL DID YOU TRUST THIS SOURCE?
THEY CALLED IN ON A SECURE LINE ONLY I'D KNOW.
TWO CALLS, LEADING TWO PEOPLE TO THE SAME PLACE. BOTH COUNTED AMONG THE DEAD, BUT SOMEONE KNEW THEY WOULD CALL *US*. OR REACH US SOMEHOW.
GUYS...

INTERNAL SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE. I THOUGHT IT WAS DESTROYED.
MOST WAS. I RECOVERED THIS.
NOW, I MAY BE GOING CRAZY, BUT LOOK AT THAT SYMBOL.
DOESN'T LOOK RUSSIAN.
IT'S NOT... IT'S JAPANESE. IT'S OLD, BUT--
IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE* IS WHAT IT IS.
THIS WASN'T JUST A MASSACRE, THIS WAS MILITARY-STYLE EXECUTION HERE.
BUT JAPAN HASN'T HAD A BLACK OPS UNIT LIKE THAT SINCE...
WORLD WAR II.
DARK OCEAN SOCIETY, "GENYŌSHA" AS THEY WERE CALLED. ULTRA-EXTREME NATIONALISTS, STARTED OUT AS THE FIRST ORGANIZED CRIME GROUP, RECRUITED EX-SAMURAI.
SURE, BUT THAT WAS YEARS AGO. THEY COLLAPSED WHEN THEIR SPYMASTER WAS KILLED. NO LEADER, EASY FOR AMERICAN OCCUPATION TO TAKE OVER.
YOU SURE THEY LOST THEIR LEADER? PLENTY OF PEOPLE FAKED DEATH DURING THE WAR.
NOT *THIS* GUY. TRUST ME. HE *DIED.*
RRRRRUMBLLL
WHAT THE HELL?

SURRENDER YOUR WEAPONS, AMERICANS AND TRAITOR!
WE WILL LET ALL OF YOU LIVE IN THE LABOR CAMPS OF SIBERIA.
SAVE THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS CARNAGE.
THAT ONE IS SENTENCED TO EXECUTION BY THE SUPREME SOVIETS!
CRIMSON DYNAMO.
PERUN.
SPUTNIK.
FANTASMA.
DYNAMO, UMALYAU! STOP. I KNOW WHAT YOU THINK, BUT NO ONE HERE IS RESPONSIBLE!
WE CAN WASTE TIME FIGHTING OR YOU CAN CATCH THE KILLERS BEFORE THEY STRIKE AGAIN.
YOU SAID PEACE TALKS ARE SET FOR RUSSIA AND JAPAN, RIGHT? PROBABLY BECAUSE OF THE KURIL ISLANDS.
AND YOUR DEAD SPY FROM LAST NIGHT WAS PART OF THE JAPANESE CONTINGENT?
KNOWING THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT, HIS REPRESENTATIVE WON'T ARRIVE UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT, ESTABLISHING A SENSE OF SUPERIORITY.
WHICH MEANS...

ST. PETERSBURG, FORMER CAPITAL CITY OF RUSSIA.
"THEY ARE STILL IN ST. PETERSBURG."
OFFICIAL RESIDENCE OF THE RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR OF BORDER RELATIONS.
<ARE THE AMBASSADOR'S BELONGINGS PACKED AND LOADED, EVANYA?>
<YES, MISS. HE'LL BE READY FOR HIS TRIP TO AMERICA AS SOON AS HE RETURNS FROM MEETING WITH THE GOVERNOR.>
URK!
SLTCH
DEATH TOLL: 4. CUMULATIVE DEATHS: 83 KNOWN.
"DYNAMO, IF YOU DON'T LEAVE NOW, A RUSSIAN LEADER WILL BE THE NEXT TO DIE AT THE HANDS OF DARK OCEAN!"

IMPOSSIBLE! THE TRAITOROUS WITCH LIES!
ZZZZZAK
THE DARK OCEAN SOCIETY FOLLOWS ONLY THEIR LEADER, AND WE HAVE CAPTURED HIM.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? LEADER?!
THEY THINK YOU'RE THEIR SPYMASTER.
ME?! I'M BARELY AN APPRENTICE! I'M KINDERGARTEN SPY!
EVER REGRET NOT DOING YOUR HOMEWORK WHEN YOU TAKE ON A NEW IDENTITY, CLINT?
SHOW THE FACE OF THE MURDEROUS LEADER OF THOSE BEHIND THE DEATHS OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
WITH PLEASURE.
BEFORE YOU WENT BACK TO BEING HAWKEYE, YOU HAD A DIFFERENT COSTUME, A DIFFERENT NAME. BUT ONE WITH A HISTORY. THE SPYMASTER OF DARK OCEAN...

"ALSO KNOWN AS
RONIN
"AND APPARENTLY HE'S KILLING AGAIN."
THA-- THAT'S NOT *ME!*

WIDOWMAKER 2

SECRET RED ROOM TRAINING FACILITY-- BLACK WIDOW PROJECT.
THA-- THAT'S NOT *ME!*
THEIR *ATTACK PATTERN* IS CLASSIC.
A MISDIRECT.
THEN, *FIRST BLOOD.*

AND FINALLY-- THE **PRIMARY ATTACK.**
CRIMSON DYNAMO: IDENTITY UNKNOWN. A THOUSAND POUNDS OF RUSSIAN STEEL AND TECH.
PERUN: IDENTITY UNKNOWN. SLAVIC GOD OF THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.
BLACK WIDOW, A.K.A. NATALIA ROMANOVA. SECRET AVENGER. SPY.
MOCKINGBIRD, A.K.A. BOBBI MORSE. AVENGER. LEADER OF WORLD COUNTERTERRORISM AGENCY.
SPUTNIK: IDENTITY UNKNOWN. LIVING HACKER ABLE TO DISRUPT ANY TECH.
HAWKEYE, A.K.A. CLINTON BARTON. AVENGER. WORLD'S GREATEST MARKSMAN.

I'M TOO DISTRACTED TO NOTICE WHAT FANTASMA IS DOING...
UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE.
<NEED TO WARN...THE OTHERS...>
<PAPA!>
Oh GOD... THEY'RE STILL ALIVE?
I KNOW THIS IS MERELY A VISION.
I KNOW THIS IS FAKE.
BUT STILL...
KRAK
THESE GIRLS... THEY WERE JUST LIKE ME, ONCE.

DAMNIT.
klik
THE GUY WEARING THIS "SPUTNIK" SUIT CAN CANCEL OUT MY WEAPONS. JUST LIKE THE REAL SPUTNIK.
<WHAT'S THE MATTER, MS. NATALIA? DO YOU MISS YOUR TOYS?>
GOING TO HAVE TO GO OLD-SCHOOL, THEN.
KNOCK HIS HEAD RIGHT--
--OFF.

ANYBODY ELSE SEEING THESE, uh... *THINGS* OR IS IT JUST ME?
AND SOON YOU WILL *JOIN THEM!*
YEAH, YEAH, YEAH...
ALL OF YOU MECHANICAL THINGS HAVE *WEAK SPOTS...*
JUST HAVEN'T FOUND IT YET.
THWANG
AND NO OFFENSE, BUT YOU... *LADIES*...AREN'T HELPING!

ZZZZZZOK
Guh...
WHERE THE HELL DID *FORTUNE* RUN OFF TO? NOT LIKE HIM TO LEAVE A FIGHT.
AND THERE'S CERTAINLY ENOUGH OF THIS GUY TO GO AROUND.
<ANY PARTICULAR REASON YOU'RE *LAUGHING?*>
<YOU'VE ALREADY *LOST.*>

ST. PETERSBURG.
"<I LIKE A GOOD BUZZ BEFORE TRAVELING.>"
A LITTLE VODKA HELPS BLUR THE EDGES, YOU UNDERSTAND.>
<YES, AMBASSADOR.>
<LECH, ARE WE CLEAR?>
<WE'RE CLEAR.>
<I THINK A QUICK SIP BEFORE BED, AND THEN ANOTHER TIPPLE WHEN I WAKE UP IN A FEW HOURS...YES, THAT SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT...>

...CLINT?
KRAK
KRAK
YOU'RE *DEAD!*
NO, BOBBI, *BEHIND* Y--
BOBBI!

NO.
IT'S JUST ANOTHER ILLUSION.
WE CAN'T FIGHT THIS WAY.
NOT WITH THE FANTASMA FACTOR.

I NEED TO REMOVE IT.
<HEY...AM I TOO MUCH FOR YOU, MS. NATALIA?>
KRSHH
I REMEMBER THESE RED ROOMS--AND THE OLD MINER'S PASSAGEWAYS BENEATH THEM--INTIMATELY.
<THERE IS NO HIDING FROM ME!>
<Oh, HOW I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO THE SOUND OF YOUR SCREAMS AS I-->
YOU FIRST.
ULK

GAHHH!
CHOOM
Oh, ARE YOU HURT, MY FRIEND?
WE CAN'T HAVE YOU *COMPLETELY* BROKEN.
YOU'D BE USELESS IN *THE WORK CAMPS.*

<CHECK THE BEDROOM. I'LL TAKE THE BATH...>
<...ROOM, OKAY?>
<CHECK.>
<ALL CL-->
SHUK
SHUK
"<WHAT IS *TAKING* SO LONG?>"
<I STILL HAVE TO PACK.>

<DUCK, LITTLE BIRD. THE BIG MONSTER IS COMING TO DESTR-->
Feh. FANCY VISIONS.
<Eh?>
FANCY GADGETS.
FANCIER IT IS, THE EASIER IT IS TO #$%& UP.
DOMINIC FORTUNE: 1940s super-soldier and merc-for-hire. member of the WCA.
ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ
LET'S GO, BOBBI. THERE ISN'T MUCH TIME, AND I ONLY HAD THIS ONE BUCKET OF WATER.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN--COME WITH YOU? WHAT ABOUT CLINT? THE WIDOW?
NO NATALIA, NO CLINT. THEY MAY ALREADY BE COMPROMISED.

"IF NOT, THEY'RE A LIABILITY."
JUST GOING TO BORROW THESE FOR A WHILE.
YOU DON'T MIND, DO YOU?
<MAYBE I WON'T BOTHER SENDING YOU TO THE WORK CAMPS AFTER ALL.>
<MAYBE I'LL JUST CRUSH YOUR FACE...>
KLIK
WHRRRR
<WAIT...I CAN'T... I CAN'T *MOVE!*>
WHAT THE HELL DID YOU SAY TO HIM?
WHAAA...? THIS THING HAD A *REMOTE CONTROL?*
C'MON. LET'S PRY HIM OUT.

<STOP... YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME!>
WHAT'S *TOUGH GUY* HERE SAYING?
HE SAID HE'S GOING TO BE HAPPY TO COOPERATE.
<ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU SAID, *BOY?*>
GO AHEAD. THREATEN HIM WITH A *WORK CAMP.*
THE BOY SPOKE QUICKLY. WE WERE LURED HERE, AND THESE FAKE "SUPREME SOVIETS" WERE TASKED WITH DISTRACTING US.
FROM WHAT? I ASKED.
*FROM THE **REAL MISSION,** HE SAID. IN ST. PETERSBURG.*

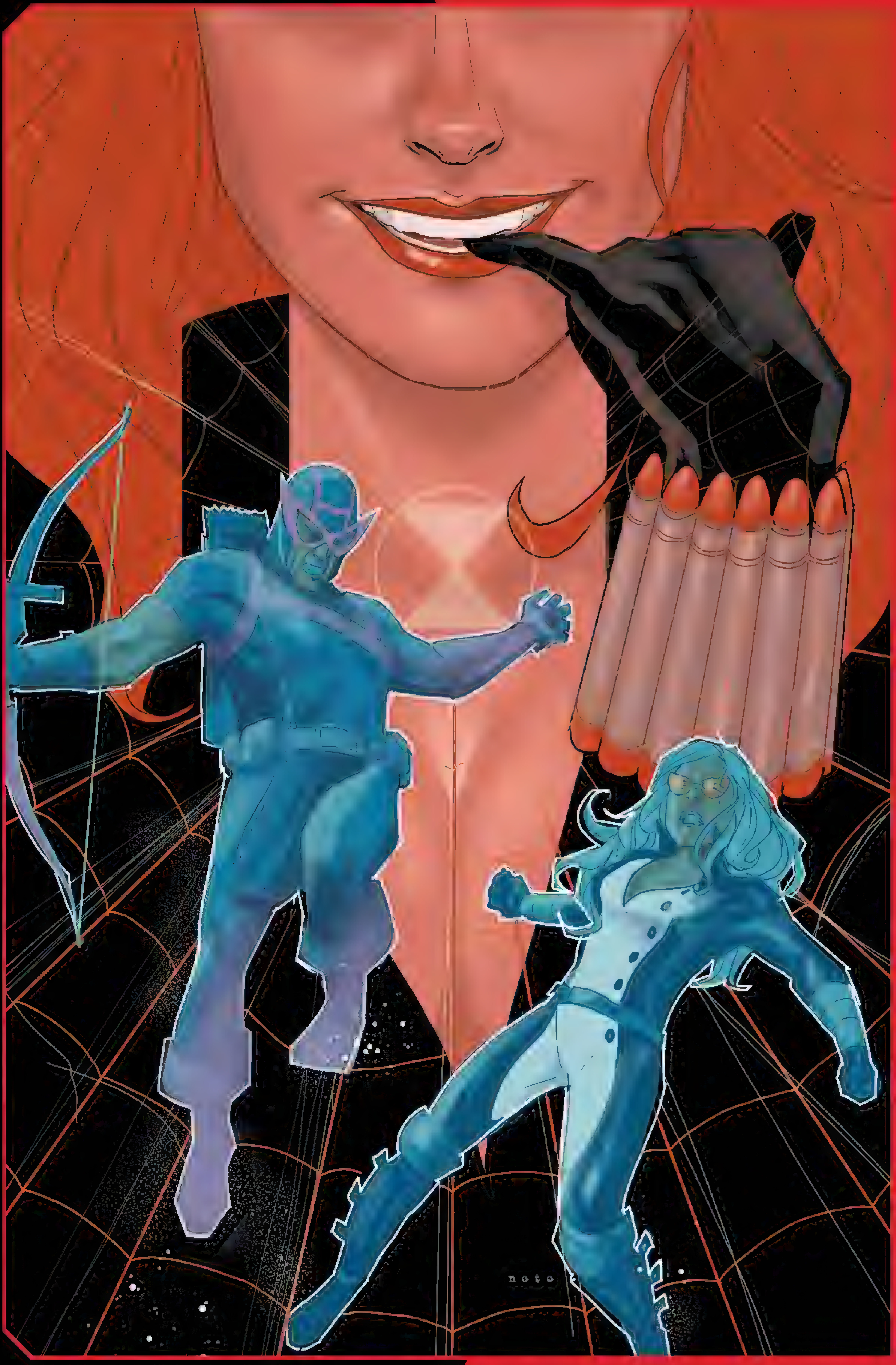
<HEY.>
<GUYS?>
<YOU DUMB JERKS, COME ON NOW.>
<I REALLY HAVE TO GO TINKLE.>
whrr whrr whrr
STEVE ROGERS
MEESTER... ROGERS?
<YOU MUST EXIT THE BUILDING RIGHT NOW.>
<WHO IS--?>
<RIGHT THIS VERY SECOND OR YOU'RE DEAD.>

<TEN MORE PACES... QUICKLY!>
<I'M... >huff huff<... TRYING...>
<TO YOUR LEFT IS A SMALL DOOR WITH A HANDLE, PROBABLY PAINTED OVER. THIS IS THE OLD DUMBWAITER SYSTEM.>
<I... I DON'T SEE IT!>
<SMALL FLAT HANDLE, RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU, MR. AMBASSADOR.>
<WAIT! I SEE IT! YOU DIDN'T TELL ME IT WAS PAINTED OVER!>
AAAH!
"ROGERS HAS SCRAMBLED A FIELD TEAM TO INTERCEPT THE AMBASSADOR. HE'S SAFE--FOR NOW."

WHAT ABOUT US?
WE'RE FIGHTING A RONIN.
SO WE GO TO--
"--*JAPAN?* I THOUGHT WE WERE DEALING WITH A ROGUE FACTION OF *RUSSIAN* HARDLINERS."
THINGS ARE *NEVER* WHAT THEY SEEM. WHAT, DID YOU MISS DAY ONE OF SPY SCHOOL?
WHATEVER, *OLD MAN.* I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT CLINT BEING COMPROMISED.
LISTEN TO ME. THESE ARE THE FINAL MOVES OF A *DECADES-OLD CHESS GAME.* AND FROM THE BEGINNING, THERE HAS BEEN A PIECE CALLED A *"RONIN."*
THE FACT THAT *YOUR BOYFRIEND* BACK THERE SPENT A LOT OF TIME DRESSED UP LIKE A RONIN CAN'T BE A COINCIDENCE.

NEAR KEMEROVO OBLAST, RUSSIA.
I KNEW HE HAD DEEP POCKETS, BUT I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT...
HE'S BEEN TRYING TO KILL ME FOR MONTHS NOW, ALONG WITH OTHER SPIES WORLDWIDE. AT FIRST I KNEW HIM AS *"SADKO."*
THAT SUCKS.
HEY. DON'T MEAN TO *BORE YOU* HERE.
SORRY. IT'S BOBBI. WHERE THE HELL DID SHE GO?
SHE'S A BIG GIRL.
whrr whrr whrr
HERE. TAKE THE WHEEL. I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS UPLOAD FROM MY CONTACTS IN ST. PETERSBURG.
SO GLAD TO SEE YOU SIGNED THE *NO PHONE ZONE* PLEDGE.
DAMNIT.
WHAT IS IT?
THIS IS ENHANCED FOOTAGE FROM THE SECURITY FEED IN THE AMBASSADOR'S APARTMENT COMPLEX.
THE HIT TEAM'S MOVES ARE *VERY FAMILIAR.*

"IN THE WORST KIND OF WAY."
<MASTER, I HAVE...>*
<OH.>
*TRANSLATED FROM JAPANESE.
<I KNOW THAT AM NOT PERMITTED TO GAZE UPON YOUR TRUE FACE.>
<I ACCEPT MY PUNISHMENT.>
Huh.
SHUKK
IF ONLY YOU TWO WERE AS COMPLIANT.



WIDOWMAKER 3

SAPPORO,
CAPITAL CITY OF HOKKAIDO, JAPAN.
CAN WE HIT A NOODLE PLACE? I'M STARVING.
AND COLD, TOO.
PAY ATTENTION.
WATCHING MEN CHEAT ON THEIR WIVES FOR A LITTLE "COMPANY" REALLY ISN'T MY--
I WILL STING YOU IF YOU DON'T SHUT UP.
GOMEN NASAI.
HOPING FOR A PHONE NUMBER? BECAUSE I THINK HE'S DONE FOR THE NIGHT.
NOT *HIS* PHONE NUMBER.

OKAY, ARTFUL DODGER, WHAT NOW?
NOW?
粉紳士
YOU GO IN THERE...
AND YOU ASK FOR MORE.
HAWKEYE, A.K.A. CLINT BARTON, AVENGER.
BLACK WIDOW, A.K.A. NATALIA ROMANOFF, EX-KGB, SECRET AVENGER.

'TASHA, JUST BECAUSE BOBBI AND I'RE ON THE OUTS RIGHT NOW DOESN'T MEAN I NEED LOVIN' LONG TIME.
IN ADDITION TO RACIST, YOU'RE BEING A REAL ASS.
WE'RE AFTER DARK OCEAN, RIGHT?
WELL, THEY EMPLOYED PLACES LIKE THESE BACK IN THE 1800S TO USE THE OLDEST PROFESSION IN THE WORLD TO GET PRETTY DAMNING SECRETS OUT OF RATHER HIGH-UP OFFICIALS.
BLACKMAIL PILLOW TALK.
EXACTLY.
THEY'RE NOT EXACTLY GOING TO GET ANYTHING OUT OF *ME*, SO THE POINT OF GOING IN THERE IS...
RECON.
BLACKMAIL'S TOO EASY THESE DAYS. THAT POOR FOOL PROBABLY HAD NO IDEA WHAT ELSE GOES ON IN THERE. THERE'S ANOTHER REASON THEY RE-OPENED THESE PLACES.
PRETTY SURE I KNOW WHAT'S IN THERE. AND WHO.
GREAT! *YOU* GO IN!
I DON'T HAVE THE SAME *ASSETS* AS YOU.

KAMCHATKA PENINSULA, RUSSIA.
"THIS SURE DON'T LOOK LIKE JAPAN."
WE NEEDED HARD DATA. SOLID LEADS.
IS THAT GRUMBLING THOSE TANKS OR BIG BESSIE BEHIND US?
MOCKINGBIRD, A.K.A. BOBBI MORSE, AVENGER & LEADER OF THE WORLD COUNTERTERRORISM AGENCY.
I KNOW YOU AREN'T OLD ENOUGH TO HAVE BEEN IN POMPEII, SO WHAT'S GOT YOU SPOOKED?
PHILIPPINES, '91. MT. PINATUBO? NOT A GOOD TIME TO GO LOOKING FOR SOME AUTHENTIC ADOBO.
DON'T WORRY, KAMBALNY'S A RELATIVELY DORMANT VOLCANO.
UNLIKE THOSE TROOP MOVEMENTS.
DOMINIC FORTUNE, SUPER-SOLDIER MERCENARY FOR HIRE.
MAYBE THEY KNOW SOMETHING WE DON'T.
LIKE WHEN TA RUN.
ENOUGH WITH THE LAVA-PHOBIA.
YOU JUST MADE UP THAT WORD.
CAN YOU FOCUS? FOLLOW THE FORMATIONS AND TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE.

"THEY FILMING ANOTHER 'HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER?' I'M SO SICK OF REMAKES."
THIS IS THE SOUTHERNMOST TIP OF THE CONTINENTAL LANDMASS OF RUSSIA BEFORE YOU REACH THE DISPUTED KURIL ISLANDS, THE CLUSTER THAT'S KEPT JAPAN AND RUSSIA ON THE BRINK OF WAR FOR OVER A CENTURY.
WITH THE ESCALATING VIOLENCE COMING FROM JAPAN AND ATTACKS ON RUSSIAN BORDERS AND AMBASSADORS, I'D HOPED THIS WOULD BE A LINE OF DEFENSE.
INSTEAD IT'S A STAGING GROUND FOR AN ASSAULT.
SO, US VERSUS THE RUSSKIES. IT'S THE COLD WAR ALL OVER AGAIN, EXCEPT THIS TIME, THEY HAVE US OUTNUMBERED.
CLICK
DA.

JAPAN.
HELLO, LADIES.
YOU WOULD *NOT* BELIEVE THE DAY I'VE HAD.
RUSSIANS AND JAPANESE AND EVERYBODY AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS. IT'S CRAZY.
OUT THERE, I MEAN, IN THE ***BUSINESS*** WORLD.
IT'S A GOOD THING I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANY OF THAT IN HERE, RIGHT?
NOW, WHO WANTS TO HELP ME TAKE MY MIND OFF FINANCES AND POLITICS AND STATE SECRETS?
MAYBE A NICE SALT SCRUB IN A DARK OCEAN BATH?
UH, LITTLE HELP HERE?
HOW HE GETS SO MANY WOMEN TO FALL FOR HIM...

Y'KNOW, WHEN YOU SENT ME IN HERE, YOU COULD'VE WARNED ME THAT THESE AREN'T JUST "LOVELY LADIES"...
THEY'RE IN THE FREAKING *SCHOOL FOR GIFTED NINJA GIRLS!*
CAN I HAVE MY BOW NOW?

OBSCURE LES MIZ SONG REFERENCE? REALLY?. IF I HADN'T ALREADY DATED YOU...
HEY! EASY, OR YOU'LL MAKE THESE GIRLS JEALOUS. THEY'RE ALREADY ANGRY ENOU-UFFF!
EEEEEEE-YAH!
I KNEW I SHOULD HAVE GONE WITH FORTUNE.

ISN'T ACTING LIKE A NINJA WHAT GOT YOU WRAPPED UP IN THIS MESS?
WORLD'S GREATEST MARKSMAN, REMEMBER? GIMME SOMETHING TO THROW OR SHOOT AND I'LL HIT!
KA-BLAM
PFFFT!
HEH. BLOWGUN. TOTALLY KEEPING THIS.
UM, WIDOW, WE PLANNING ON RETREATING ANY TIME SOON?
NOT YET. SHE'LL BE HERE ANY MOMENT. THERE'S NO WAY SHE'D MISS THIS.
WANNA CLUE ME IN ON WHAT ***SHE*** LOOKS LIKE?

KAFF! KAFF!
NEVERMIND...
FOUND HER.
MADAME. I KNEW YOU COULDN'T RESIST RE-OPENING THE PLACE.
NATALIA. SO, YOU STILL LIVE.
FOR NOW.
THE MADAME, LEADER OF THE KUNOICHI OF DARK OCEAN.
SEEMS WE'VE BOTH CHEATED DEATH FOR SOME TIME NOW.
YOU THINK TODAY WILL BE THE ENDING OF A REIGN THAT'S LASTED CENTURIES?
THAT'S THE PLAN.

THE SILKWORM'S THREAD IS STRONGER THAN THE SPIDER'S WEB. WHEN WILL YOU LEARN?
WHEN YOU LEARN THAT YOU'VE ALWAYS DONE YOUR BEST WORK ON YOUR BACK.
HURN!
HUMOROUS.
THAT'S WHAT OUR RONIN HAS SAID ABOUT YOUR SKILLS.
WHO--

HE WILL TEAR APART YOUR HOMELAND BY VIRTUALLY DESTROYING PART OF MINE, ALL TO BUILD A NEW DYNASTY.
AND I WILL STAND BY HIM NOT AS THE MADAME BUT AS AN EMPRESS.
YOU CHASE OLD GHOSTS, NATALIA.
GHOSTS THAT CAN COME BACK AND HAUNT YOU...
OR VANISH INTO THE NIGHT.
PFFFFT
SO THAT WENT WELL.
OLD GIRLFRIEND? YOU TWO GO SHOPPING AT THE SAME WEAPONS DEPOT?
THE MADAME GOES BACK FURTHER THAN ANYBODY I KNOW, EXCEPT MAYBE LOGAN.
HAVEN'T SEEN HER SINCE WORLD WAR II. SHE'S SHOWN HER FACE FOR A REASON.
SHE WAS SHOWING OFF, AND INSTEAD SHE SHOWED HER HAND.
THANKS TO HER SELF-ENTITLEMENT, I KNOW WHERE RONIN IS NOW. AND BETTER...
I KNOW *WHO* HE IS.

<MOVE, AMERICAN SCUM!>
AFTER FIGHTIN' A COUPLE'A WARS AGAINST THESE GUYS, YOU REALIZE THEY REALLY DO JUST HAVE *THICK* SKULLS.
SHUNK
SHUNK
JUST WANNA... SMASH SOME SENSE INTO 'EM, Y'KNOW?
DOM, TELL ME YOU'VE SEEN *"RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK."*
OPENING NIGHT, DOLL. GORGEOUS BLONDE ON MY ARM. OR WAS SHE A RED-HEAD. WAIT...
OH YEAH, BOTH. ONE ON EACH.
ALL RIGHT, ROMEO, I DON'T NEED TO KNOW THE DETAILS. JUST SUIT UP.
WE NEED TO LOOK LIKE THEM...
IF WE'RE GOING TO TAKE ONE OF *THOSE.*

I WAS HOPING FOR MORE OF A FIGHT. THEY BOUGHT OUR COVER? EVEN WITH MY RUSSIAN?
YOU CURSE LIKE A SAILOR, THEY THINK YOU'RE A SAILOR.
WHAT CAN I SAY, SOMETIMES WE'RE ACTUALLY *GOOD* AT OUR JOBS?
THE PEACE TALKS ARE A BUST. RONIN'S MOVES AGAINST THE RUSSIANS EITHER WORKED OR SCARED THE HELL OUT OF THEM.
SEA OF OKHOTSK. COORDINATES 45°02'N 147°37'E.
THEY'RE MOUNTING FOR WAR, AND JUDGING BY THE SUBS, IT'LL BE A NAVAL BATTLE, WHICH MEANS--
ISLAND HOPPING. YOU BRING YOUR BIKINI?
AS MUCH AS I LOVE BEING RIGHT...
"I LOVE IT WHEN HE IS, TOO."
ITURUP, SOUTHERNMOST OF THE DISPUTED KURIL ISLANDS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND JAPAN.
THOUGHT YOU'D DEFECTED, FORTUNE.
COULD SAY THE SAME ABOUT YOU, BARTON.
RONIN COMES BACK AFTER ALL THIS TIME. WHO'S TA SAY YOU'RE NOT CONNECTED.
BECAUSE I'M NOT HITTING YOU, DOM.
YOU CAME HERE IN THAT THING?
YOU TWO AND MOVIES AND MUSICALS. MADE FOR EACH OTHER.

CLINT, I WANTED TO GO BACK...
I KNEW I'D SEE YOU AGAIN.
ALWAYS DO, DON'T WE, BIRDIE?

HOW'D YOU...?
OLD JAPANESE FRIEND. YOU?
NEW RUSSIAN ENEMIES. SAME AS THE OLD ONES. HATS ARE LESS SCRATCHY.
ALL ROADS LEADING BACK TO HERE.
WHERE THE FIRST MAJOR NON-ESPIONAGE TARGET WAS KILLED.
LIKE BIG POINTY...
ARROWS?
I WAS GETTING THERE. OR...HERE. WHERE THE ARROWS WANTED US.
OR IS IT WHERE YOUR MASTER WANTED YOU?
THANK YOU FOR JOINING ME. SURE, SOME OF YOU SHOULD HAVE DIED ALONG THE WAY, BUT YOU CAN ONLY DELAY THE INEVITABLE SO LONG.
SO WE'RE CLEAR, THAT IS *NOT* ME!
NO IT'S NOT.

UNFORTUNATELY, I DO KNOW WHO IT IS.
INTIMATELY.
RIGHT, ALEXI?
MY KRASIVAYA PAOOK, BEAUTIFUL SPIDER.
I'D MARRY YOU AGAIN. IF I DIDN'T HATE YOU SO.
ALEXI SHOSTAKOV, ORIGINAL RED GUARDIAN, CURRENT RONIN.

THAT'S YOUR EX-HUSBAND?
YEP.
HE GET SICK OF PAYING ALIMONY?
HOW'S HE LOOK SO YOUNG?
YOUTH SERUMS ARE ALL THE RAGE. WE SHOULD *BOTH* KNOW THAT.
ALEXI SHOSTAKOV WAS THE RUSSIAN ANSWER TO CAPTAIN AMERICA. THEIR FIRST SUPER-SOLDIER.
SO WHY WOULD THEIR SHINIEST "HERO" DECLARE WAR AGAINST HIS MOTHERLAND?
WHAT'D THEY DO, RAISE THE PRICE OF VODKA?
RRRAGH!
THIS IS NOT MY MOTHERLAND! I FOUGHT FOR AN EMPIRE. THE GREATEST POWER IN THE WORLD.
NOW IT WITHERS, A SHELL OF ITS FORMER SELF, DEFILED BY DEMOCRACY AND LED BY A PRESIDENT.
WE HAVE BECOME OUR ENEMIES.
BUT NOW COMES THE TIME FOR REVOLUTION.
NOW IS THE TIME FOR WAR. ONE THAT WILL LEAVE IN ITS WAKE AN UNDISPUTED WORLD LEADER.
YEAH, YOU AND WHAT ARMY?
I *REALLY* WISH YOU HADN'T SAID THAT.

RUSSIA AND JAPAN'S FINEST. TWO FORCES, UNITED IN A SINGLE CAUSE, LED BY ONE WHO HAD FALLEN FROM GRACE AND NOW RECLAIMS HIS LIFE, HIS DESTINY, AND HIS EMPIRE.
WITNESS THE RISE OF THE RONIN!

THIS IS JUST ANOTHER TRICK. TAKE OUT THE CHICK WITH THE LEAST CLOTHES AND EVERYONE GOES BYE-BYE.
THIS ISN'T AN ILLUSION BY THIS SPECIAL LITTLE GIRL. NO, THIS IS A VISION.
MY VISION.
WHY LEAD US ALL HERE, ALEXI? WHY NOT CONTINUE YOUR ATTACKS ON THE PEACE TALKS?
DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT'S WHAT THIS WAS ABOUT? ONE MORE TALK WOULD DO NOTHING.
BUT CRIPPLE THE WORLD'S INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES WHILE ALL EYES ARE ON THE PEACE TREATY...
AND THE WORLD IS BLIND.
LEAVING US TO STRIKE, IN THE DARK.
SO WHY INVOLVE US? YOU WENT OUT OF YOUR WAY TO GET US HERE.
TO RESURRECT DARK OCEAN, THEY NEEDED THE RONIN TO RETURN, RESTORED TO HIS FORMER GLORY. WHICH MEANT THE SACRIFICE OF THOSE WHO DEFILED THE NAME BEFORE.
THE ONE WHO WORE THIS BEFORE YOU, THE WOMAN KNOWN AS ECHO, REMAINS WELL HIDDEN. BUT YOU... ALL THAT WAS NEEDED TO GET TO YOU...
WAS YOUR LADY LOVE.
I'M SORRY, MY DEAR, BUT YOU CONTINUE TO BE MERE BAIT, A PAWN IN EVERY GAME PLAYED AROUND YOU.
FORTUNE WAS A BONUS. VENGEANCE FOR KILLING THEIR LAST MASTER IN THE FINAL DAYS OF THE LAST WORLD WAR.
AND YOU, NATALIA, I WANTED YOU TO SEE ALL OF THIS. WHAT I COULD ACCOMPLISH.
BEFORE I KILL YOU.

YOU TAKE AWAY THAT WHICH SOMEONE OR SOMETHING FIGHTS FOR, AND THEY ARE LEFT IN A WEAKENED STATE.
LOST.
AND SO I WILL TAKE AWAY WHAT TWO NATIONS HAVE QUIBBLED OVER FOR SO LONG, TEARING THEM DOWN BY DESTROYING WHAT THEY HAVE FOUGHT TO CLAIM.
THE DESTRUCTION OF THESE ISLANDS.
DAMMIT. WHAT DID I SAY ABOUT VOLCANOES?
WHILE THE WORLD SITS, STUNNED AT THIS DEVASTATION, WE WILL SPREAD INTO THE CRIPPLED RUSSIA AND JAPAN, AND UNSEAT THEIR LEADERS.
WITH NO PRYING EYES LEFT ALIVE, WE CAN SLIP IN AND KILL THEM ALL, TEARING DOWN TWO NATIONS AT ONCE.
THIS WILL BE MY LEGACY--A NEW, UNITED EMPIRE, RISING FROM THE ASHES OF THESE ISLANDS...
RRRRUMMMMBLE
AND THE ASHES OF YOU WHO ARE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO OPPOSE ME.
THE CHOICE IS NOW YOURS...

KRA-FWOOM
DIE SWIFTLY FIGHTING OR SLOWLY IN FLAMES?

WIDOWMAKER 4

KURIL ISLANDS, BETWEEN THE BORDERS OF RUSSIA AND JAPAN.
BEHIND US, A DORMANT VOLCANO THAT'S JUST BEEN KICK-STARTED INTO VIOLENT, LAVA-SPLATTERING ACTIVITY.
IN FRONT, A BATTALION OF SUPREME SOVIETS--MASS-PRODUCED COPIES OF THE ORIGINAL TEAM--AS WELL AS A PHALANX OF DARK OCEAN WARRIORS, A SECRET SOCIETY OF JAPANESE ULTRANATIONALISTS.
SO TO RECAP: ELEMENTAL FORCES. THE WORLD'S LATEST TECH. AND ASSASSINS TRAINED IN CENTURIES-OLD METHODS OF EFFICIENT SLAUGHTER.
BUT THAT'S NOT THE WORST OF IT.

MY EX-HUSBAND IS ALSO HERE.
DIE SWIFTLY FIGHTING, OR SLOWLY IN FLAMES!
I'D PREFER A **LAVA BATH** THAN TO HAVE TO LOOK AT YOU ONE SECOND LONGER, ALEXI.
UH... SOMETHING THE MATTER WITH **FIGHTING?**
MOCKINGBIRD, A.K.A. BOBBI MORSE. AVENGER. LEADER OF WORLD COUNTER-TERRORISM AGENCY.
BLACK WIDOW, A.K.A. NATALIA ROMANOVA. SECRET AVENGER. SPY.
DOMINIC FORTUNE, SUPER-SOLDIER. MERC FOR HIRE.
HAWKEYE, A.K.A. CLINTON BARTON. AVENGER. WORLD'S GREATEST MARKSMAN.
WHOA...YOU'RE RUNNING AWAY? **SERIOUSLY?**
NATALIA?

AH, WHAT THE HELL.
WELL?
THIS IS CRAZY, THIS IS CRAZY, THIS IS CRAZY...
<LET THEM RUN TO EMBRACE THEIR DEATHS, THEN.>*
<MY SUPREME SOVIETS...BE SURE TO ESCORT THEM *ALL THE WAY.*>
<DARK OCEAN, COME TO ME.>**
*TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN.
**TRANSLATED FROM JAPANESE.

YOU *DO* HAVE A PLAN, RIGHT, NATALIA? OR IS THIS JUST SOME HEROIC, FLASHY WAY TO DIE?
I'M LOOKING FOR A *PARASITIC CONE.* CHANCES ARE GOOD THERE'S ONE ON OUR SIDE OF THE FLANK...
PARASITIC *WHAT?!*
WAIT, LET ME GUESS-- YOU'VE BEEN IN A VOLCANIC *DEATH TRAP* BEFORE, HAVEN'T YOU?
I'M... INSANELY *HOT.*
IT'S THE LAVA...NOT *YOU,* SPORT.
...GETTING HOTTER...
I'M SURE THE WIDOW HAS A PLAN.
REMIND ME TO TELL YOU THE *REAL STORY* BEHIND THE MT. ST. HELEN'S ERUPTION SOMEDAY.

<THE HEAT... AND NO COOLING SYSTEM!>
<"COOLING SYSTEM NOT A PRIORITY," THEY SAID.>
<I DID NOT SIGN ON FOR THIS!>
OKAY-- STOP HERE.
PULL ANY GEAR YOU HAVE THAT GOES *BOOM*. WE'RE GOING TO NEED EVERY BIT OF EXPLOSIVE POWER IF WE'RE GOING TO SURVIVE.
AND IF THIS DOESN'T WORK?
LET'S HOPE THE LAVA SEARS OUR NERVES SHUT BEFORE WE FEEL TOO MUCH PAIN.

<THEY ARE AS GOOD AS DEAD.>
<AND THOUGH I WOULD LOVE TO WATCH...>
<WE HAVE A WORLD TO CHANGE.>
CAN'T BELIEVE YOU TALKED US INTO GETTING *CLOSER* TO THIS DAMNED THING.
HURL YOUR EXPLOSIVES AT THE BASE OF THE CONE, THEN *RUN LIKE HELL* TO THE FLANKS.
IF MY GEOPHYSICS ARE CORRECT...
...WELL?!
THEN *WHAT?*
WE *MIGHT* NOT DIE.

ON MY MARK...3... 2...GO!
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP
SORRY! TIMING WAS A BIT PREMATURE!
BIG SHOCKER THERE.
SPAK
UH... NOTHING'S HAPPENING.
AND THOSE RUSSKIE CYBORGS ARE ALMOST *RIGHT UP OUR--*

BOOM

THAT'S... THAT'S *FREAKIN' BEAUTIFUL.*
LET'S NOT GO POPPING CORKS AND BREAKING OUT THE CHEESE AND CRACKERS QUITE YET.
WE STILL HAVE TO GET BACK DOWN THE SIDE OF THE *ACTIVE VOLCANO.*
LAST ONE DOWN IS A ROTTEN SULPHURIC EGG!
WHOA!
EASY. IT'S JUST LIKE SURFING.
DO I LOOK LIKE THE "HANG TEN" TYPE TO YOU?
<YOU... WILL... *DIE!*>
YEAH, YEAH.
BLAM

THEY'RE BEATING US DOWN.
FOLLOW MY LEAD.
UNBELIEVEABLE.
OKAY. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST OF THESE *CRISPY CRITTERS* FROM THE REAR. BOBBI, YOU AND CLINT PEEL THE DARK OCEAN GOONS AWAY SO NATALIA CAN TAKE ALEXI. BUT REMEMBER--
I KNOW, I KNOW. WE NEED MY EX-HUSBAND ALIVE IF WE'RE GOING TO PREVENT THIS FROM *SPIRALING INTO A GLOBAL CONFLICT.*
YOU CAN ALWAYS KILL HIM LATER.
OH, SURE, THAT'S FAIR. TWO OF US AGAINST...YOU KNOW, I CAN'T EVEN COUNT THAT HIGH.
MAN UP, BUTTERCUP. YOU AIN'T THE ONE WHO HAS TO BAT CLEAN-UP ON THE SIDE OF A FREAKIN' VOLCANO.

HEY, *CREEPY HENCH-PEOPLE!*
GUESS YOU DON'T NEED ME TO TRANSLATE *THAT* FOR YOU.
<END HIS LIFE.>
THAT'S IT, CLINT. DO WHAT YOU DO BEST--PISS THEM OFF.
<SO IT COMES DOWN TO THIS, ANYWAY.>
<FATE WILL HAVE NO ONE ELSE; THE TASK HAS FALLEN TO ME.>

IF LAVA STARTS FLOWING THROUGH THIS *DAMN THING,* I'M NEVER SPEAKING TO YOU AGAIN.
DEAL.
WAIT...*THIS* IS YOUR IDEA OF A DEFENSIVE POSITION?
ALWAYS BETTER TO FIGHT ON *TWO FRONTS* THAN *FOUR.*
CLINT AND BOBBI HAVE SIPHONED OFF ENOUGH OF THE KILLER GUARDS...
...SO IT'S NOT LONG BEFORE I'M FACE-TO-FACE WITH MY EX AGAIN.

I THINK THERE ARE MORE COMING FROM *MY* SIDE.
WAH, WAH, *WAHHH...*
LET'S TRADE THEN.
COUNT OF THREE? ONE, TWO...
CLINT.
NGUH!
KUD
WHOA--
YOU OKAY?
F-FINE.

WE'VE SHARED THIS DANCE BEFORE, MY EX AND I.
HE IS EAGER TO REMIND ME THAT HE STILL KNOWS THE **OLD MOVES.**
AND HAS A PRETERNATURAL ABILITY TO DETECT **NEW WOUNDS.**
MY ONLY OTHER CHOICE IS TO RUN A MIND-OP.
ONLY PROBLEM IS-- ALEXI KNOWS **EVERY TRICK IN THE MIND-OP BOOK.**

OUT OF ARROWS HERE!
DOWN TO ONE CLIP...
OKAY, THIS MAY TURN UGLY.
GUH!
klik klik klik
THE *HELL...?*
MISS ME?

<I CAN UNDERSTAND THE DESIRE TO CREATE A MORE POWERFUL RUSSIA, ALEXI. BUT ON THE CORSPES OF THE ***INNOCENT?***>
<THEY ARE ***MARTYRS*** FOR A NOBLE CAUSE.>
<BULL#$%&! YOU AT LEAST OWE ME THE ***TRUTH.*** AFTER ALL THAT YOU PROMISED ME WHEN I WAS YOUNG.>
<SURELY THIS ***CAN'T*** BE WHAT YOU HAD IN MIND...>
<NO INNOCENT LIVES WERE LOST. AS YOU WELL KNOW, NATALIA, SPIES ARE ***FAIR GAME.***>
<MY VOLUNTEER ARMY WAS FUNDED BY SIMPLE-YET-LUCRATIVE CYBER-CRIME ENDEAVORS, SKIMMING THE EXCESS FROM THE GREEDIEST NATIONS IN THE WORLD.>
<PLUNDER HAS ***ALWAYS*** BEEN AN ACCEPTABLE FORM OF NATION-BUILDING.>
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO, NATALIA.
AND IT WON'T WORK.

klank
klank
I HAD TO KNOW.
BECAUSE NOW I CAN JOIN YOU WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.

<OH, MY NATALIA.>
<DO YOU FORGET THAT I *TAUGHT YOU* THIS TRICK?>
THWOK
MIND STEPPING TO THE SIDE?
CHOOM
CHOOM
CHOOM

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
<WHO...?!>
OH.
MY *ALEXI*.

SHE WAS LIKE ME, ONCE. YOUNG. **IMPRESSIONABLE.** EAGER TO PLEASE.
BUT **NOT** BEYOND REDEMPTION.
I KNEW IT WAS FUTILE TO CHANGE ALEXI'S MIND. SO MY WORDS WERE NOT MEANT FOR HIM.
THEY WERE MEANT FOR **HIS YOUNG FANTASMA,** WHO NEARBY, LISTENED AND WAITED FOR HER MASTER.
I KNOW THE THINGS ALEXI PROMISES IMPRESSIONABLE YOUNG GIRLS.
I KNOW HOW IT STINGS TO HEAR HE'S **PROMISED OTHERS** THE SAME THINGS.
SO I GAMBLED THAT THE GIRL WAS MORE LIKE ME THAN **NOT.**

LATER. THIRTY-THOUSAND FEET ABOVE THE PACIFIC OCEAN.
ALEXI'S WOUNDS ARE SERIOUS, BUT HE'LL LIVE.
AND SOON, HE WILL HAVE TO ANSWER FOR HIS ACTIONS. UNDO THE **DAMAGE HE'S DONE.**
JUST LET ME LOOK.
AND I TOLD YOU, I'M ***FINE.***
SUIT YOURSELF.
EH.
THIS IS WHY YOU ***NEVER*** DATE A SPY.
THE END.

FEAR ITSELF: BLACK WIDOW

Marseille
<"ISN'T IT FUNNY HOW *FATE* WORKS?*>
*TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH.
<"ALMOST AS IF IT RESPONDS TO THE...I DON'T KNOW...THE *ZEITGEIST* OF THE POPULACE.>
<"MY EMPLOYERS WANT TO SPREAD FEAR...>
<"AND FEAR BLOSSOMS--ACROSS THE WORLD--LIKE A FIELD OF POPPIES.">
<AND OF ALL THE PEOPLE WHO MIGHT TRY TO STOP US...THEY SEND *YOU*.>
<THE BLACK WIDOW...>
<BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY MY EMPLOYERS WILL BE ESPECIALLY PLEASED TO MEET YOU, MY DEAR.>

‹SO, IT *MUST* BE FATE, NO?›
‹PERHAPS SHE HAS NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU, LAURENT.›
‹I WONDER IF SHE MIGHT SPEAK TO ME. I WONDER IF SHE EVEN REMEMBERS.›
‹FOUR YEARS AGO IN BELIZE. TWO YEARS AGO IN BEIJING. LAST YEAR IN BERLIN.›
‹YOU'VE MEDDLED IN THE AFFAIRS OF MY ORGANIZATION FAR TOO OFTEN...SPOILED TOO MANY EXPENSIVE OPERATIONS FOR US TO REMAIN *NAMELESS ENEMIES.*›
‹SURELY, YOU SEE ME AS A *RESPECTED ADVERSARY*... SOMEONE WORTHY OF A FEW LAST WORDS.›

NO?
VERY WELL.
LAURENT?
‹GOODBYE, BLACK WIDOW.›
BLAM

SIX HOURS
EARLIER.

THIS IS FAR ENOUGH, PEREGRINE.
GET LOST...BUT STAY CLOSE.
TEN MINUTES TO EXTRACTION.
SO SOON?

I'VE GOT PLACES TO BE.
I'M *WASTED* HERE.
WHETHER HE'LL ADMIT IT OR NOT, ROGERS NEEDS ME...NOW MORE THAN EVER.
WITH EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN THE WORLD, IT'S AMAZING WE EVEN PICKED UP *CHATTER* ABOUT THIS OPERATION. OUR ENEMIES WERE PROBABLY COUNTING ON US OVERLOOKING IT.
RESOURCES ARE STRETCHED THIN RIGHT NOW.
AT LEAST, THAT'S ROGERS' EXCUSE FOR SENDING *ME* HERE.
I KNOW BETTER.

I KNOW HE THINKS THAT-- AFTER WHAT HAPPENED IN WASHINGTON--I'M NOT ON MY GAME.
I KNOW HE THINKS I'M A *LIABILITY.*
HE THINKS I'LL LET MY *EMOTIONS* TRIP ME UP IF I'M TOO CLOSE TO THE PRIMARY THEATER OF WAR.
BUT I'VE BEEN RUNNING OPS... LOSING FRIENDS... FOR A LONG TIME.
I'VE LEARNED TO PLAY THE ROLE OF MY NAMESAKE VERY WELL.
COLD.
EFFICIENT.

RUTHLESS.
ALL CLEAR UP HERE.
A .22 IS NOT THE MOST POWERFUL HANDGUN, BUT WITH A SILENCER, IT BARELY MAKES A WHISPER.
AND I'M TARGETING THE *"APRICOT"*--THE SNIPER'S SWEET SPOT--SO THEY'RE DEAD BEFORE THEY CAN SO MUCH AS GASP.
IN LIGHT OF WHAT'S HAPPENED IN PARIS, HALF THE PEOPLE IN MARSEILLE ARE EVACUATING, FLEEING FROM A POPULATION CENTER. OTHERS SOUGHT THE SOLACE...THE HOPE...THAT CAN ONLY BE FOUND IN CHURCH.
THESE POOR SOULS SIMPLY PICKED THE WRONG PLACE OF WORSHIP.
OVER A DOZEN TERRORISTS--WELL-TRAINED MERCENARIES, IF THE INTEL'S ON POINT.
WHOEVER THEY ARE... WHATEVER THEY'RE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH...THEY'RE USING THE PANIC GRIPPING THE CITY TO FURTHER THEIR AGENDA.
THEY SEE THE CHAOS...THE LOSS OF LIFE...AS NOTHING MORE THAN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKING.
GGGGKK--

I CAN'T RISK RESCUING THE HOSTAGES.
THE COMMOTION WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY ALERT MY TRUE TARGETS.
PEREGRINE... I'M GOING TO NEED AN ASSIST.
YOU NEED BUT SAY THE WORD.
THERE ARE SOME CIVILIANS IN THE CATHEDRAL WHO ARE IN NEED OF A *MIRACLE.*
ON MY MARK.

AN ANCILLARY MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OPS ROOM HIDDEN IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CATHEDRAL...ONE OF MANY HIDDEN IN VARIOUS PLACES THROUGHOUT FRANCE... READY TO SPRING INTO ACTION IN CASE THE CAPITAL IS COMPROMISED.
BUT THEY COULDN'T HAVE ANTICIPATED THE CURRENT...*MADNESS*...

...AND THEY OBVIOUSLY DIDN'T EXPECT TO BE *INVADED.*
<WOULD YOU LOOK AT THIS?*>
<I HAVE SEEN SOME TERRIBLE THINGS IN MY DAY, BUT THIS...>
*TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH.
2PM
<THIS IS A WORK OF A TRUE MASTER!>
<AN ENTIRE CITY TURNED TO STONE!>

<NO WONDER OUR TIMETABLES SHIFTED, HUH? NO WONDER OUR EMPLOYERS ARE IN SUCH A RUSH!>
<IF THEY WAIT MUCH LONGER, THERE WON'T BE ANYTHING LEFT OF THE WORLD TO TERRORIZE!>
<THE DATA TRANSFER IS ALMOST COMPLETE.>
T-TINK-TINK
EH?
SFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF
<TEAR GAS!>
<C-CAN'T SEE!>
<MY EYES!>
<MASKS! PUT YOUR MASKS ON!>

THE GAS IS A SPECIAL CONCOCTION.
NOT ONLY DOES IT BLIND ANYONE NOT WEARING PROTECTIVE GEAR, IT ELICITS A DISORIENTING EFFECT, NOT UNLIKE BEING DRUNK.
THE HOSTAGES WILL HAVE A ROUGH TIME WITH THE GAS...BUT SO WILL THEIR CAPTORS.
IN THE END, THE HOSTAGES WILL BE NAUSEOUS FOR A WHILE AND THEY'LL HAVE WHAT FEELS LIKE THE WORST HANGOVER OF THEIR LIFE FOR A FEW DAYS...
THE TERRORISTS WON'T BE SO LUCKY.
THUNK
WHACK
UNF!
OOOF!

<QUICK, YOU SAY?>
KRRR-RAAAASSH
<I THINK I CAN ACCOMMODATE YOU!>

AAGHH!
EZZAPP
YEARRGH!
THE BOSS IS A KNOWN QUANTITY. I'VE SEEN HIS FILE.
RAPIDO. CUTTHROAT MERCENARY WITH CYBORG ENHANCEMENTS.
NO ONE PLAYS FAIR THESE DAYS.
CHH-BRAKKA-BRAKKA-BRAKKA-BRAKKA

HEH HEH HEH!
<HOLD STILL, LITTLE SPIDER, AND I'LL MAKE THIS *PAINLESS!*>
CHH-BRAKKA-BRAKKA-BRAK
KA
RAPIDO, RIGHT?
CAN'T DODGE THIS KIND OF FIREPOWER FOREVER. HAVE TO GET IN CLOSE...WHERE HE DOESN'T HAVE A SHOT.
YOUR GIRLFRIEND GIVE YOU THAT NAME?
HNNNF!
EAAAGH!

DID THEY SUCCEED?
THE EQUIPMENT'S RUINED. WE'LL HAVE TO ASSUME THEY DID.
AND IF THEY DID, WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR A LENGTHY INVESTIGATION. WE'LL HAVE TO GET WHAT WE NEED THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY.
I KNOW THIS MAN. HE WON'T BREAK EASILY.
WE'LL SEE.
WHERE DID YOU SEND THOSE CODES?
‹GET OUT OF MY FACE BEFORE I BITE YOUR NOSE OFF!›
MAYBE PEREGRINE'S RIGHT. MAYBE YOU ARE TOO TOUGH TO BREAK.
BUT I WONDER ABOUT YOUR FRIEND.
WHERE?

RAPIDO AND HIS GOONS WERE JUST HIRED MERCENARIES...THIEVES AFTER A VERY SPECIFIC AND VERY DANGEROUS PAYLOAD.
THE REAL THREAT IS HERE...ON BOARD THIS SHIP.
THEY WERE AFTER THE FRENCH EQUIVALENT OF AMERICA'S *NUCLEAR FOOTBALL.*
THEY WANTED THE LOCATIONS OF FRANCE'S MISSILES... THE LAUNCH CODES...
THEY WANTED THE ENTIRE COUNTRY'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL.
WITH IT, THEY COULD RAIN FIRE ALL ACROSS THE WORLD.

RIGHT NOW, THE WORLD HAS ENOUGH PROBLEMS.
AT THIS POINT, THOUGH, INTEL IS NONEXISTENT.
I DON'T KNOW WHO I'M DEALING WITH OR WHAT THEIR INTENTIONS MIGHT BE.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH TIME I HAVE BEFORE THEY PULL THE TRIGGER ON ONE--OR ALL--OF THOSE MISSILES.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT KIND OF DEFENSES I'M UP AGAINST--
UNNGH!
WHUMP

NOW.
<WELL?>
<WILL THIS WORK?>
<OF COURSE IT WILL.>
<YOU HIRED THE BEST FOR A REASON, DIDN'T YOU?>
<VERY WELL. MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR A STRIKE AGAINST LONDON.>
<WAIT...>
<YOU'RE *REALLY* GOING TO LAUNCH AN ATTACK?>
<THAT MAKES LITTLE SENSE, GENTLEMEN, IF YOU DON'T MIND ME SAYING SO.>
<WE HAVE THE CODES...YOU COULD STAGE AN ATTACK WHENEVER YOU WANT... THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD WILL BE *AFRAID* OF YOU NOW.>

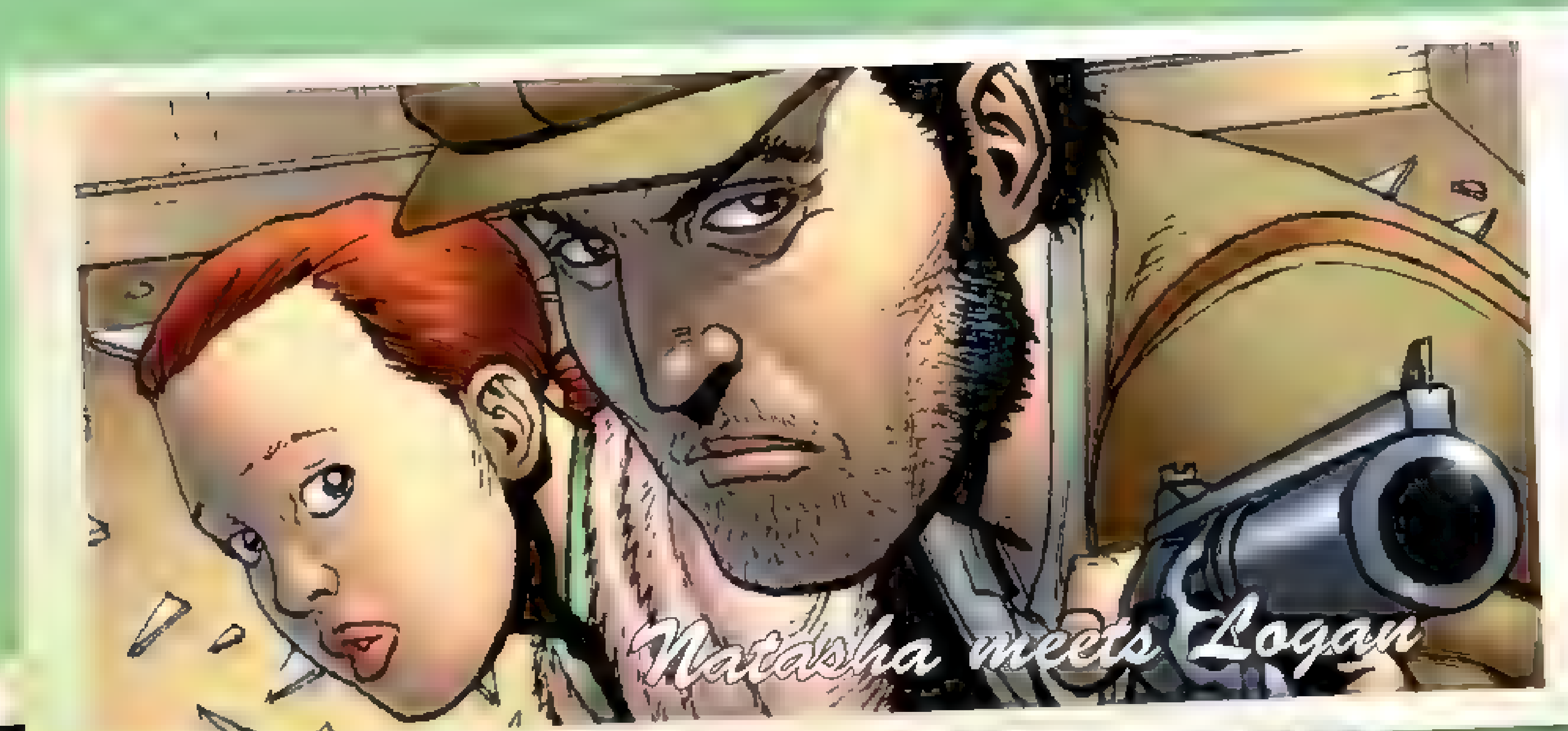
‹WE'RE NOT IN THE BUSINESS OF FEAR, LAURENT.›
‹WE'RE IN THE BUSINESS OF *TERROR.*›
‹BUT SOMEONE HAS BEATEN US AT OUR OWN GAME.›
‹IF WE DON'T SHOW THE WORLD THAT WE'RE A LEGITIMATE THREAT *NOW,* WE MAY NEVER GET THE CHANCE.›
‹AND WE PAID YOU TO ORGANIZE RETRIEVAL AND ACTIVATION OF THESE CODES...NOT TO QUESTION OUR PLANS.›
‹VERY WELL.›
‹DO IT.›
‹IS THAT WHAT THIS WAS ABOUT?›
‹SOME SENSELESS EXTREMIST ATTACK?›
‹ARE YOU REALLY THAT AFRAID THAT NO ONE WILL EVER NOTICE YOU... THAT YOU'LL REMAIN A NAMELESS NOBODY?›
‹WHAT THE--›
‹DON'T WORRY. YOU'RE NOT HEARING A *GHOST.*›
‹THIS IS A *LIFE MODEL DECOY,* DESIGNED TO PROTECT HIGH PROFILE INDIVIDUALS FROM ASSASSINATION.›
‹I APPROPRIATED THIS ONE FOR MISSIONS JUST LIKE THIS.›

<OF COURSE, THIS ONE WAS OUTFITTED WITH LISTENING DEVICES SO I COULD MAKE SURE YOU WERE ALL IN THE SAME PLACE...>
<...A TRANSMITTER, SO I COULD SAY GOODBYE...>
<...AND ENOUGH EXPLOSIVES TO TURN EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU INTO NOTHING BUT A BAD MEMORY.>
<WHAT'S THE MATTER?>
<DON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY TO SUCH A "RESPECTED ADVERSARY"?>
KWA-BOOM

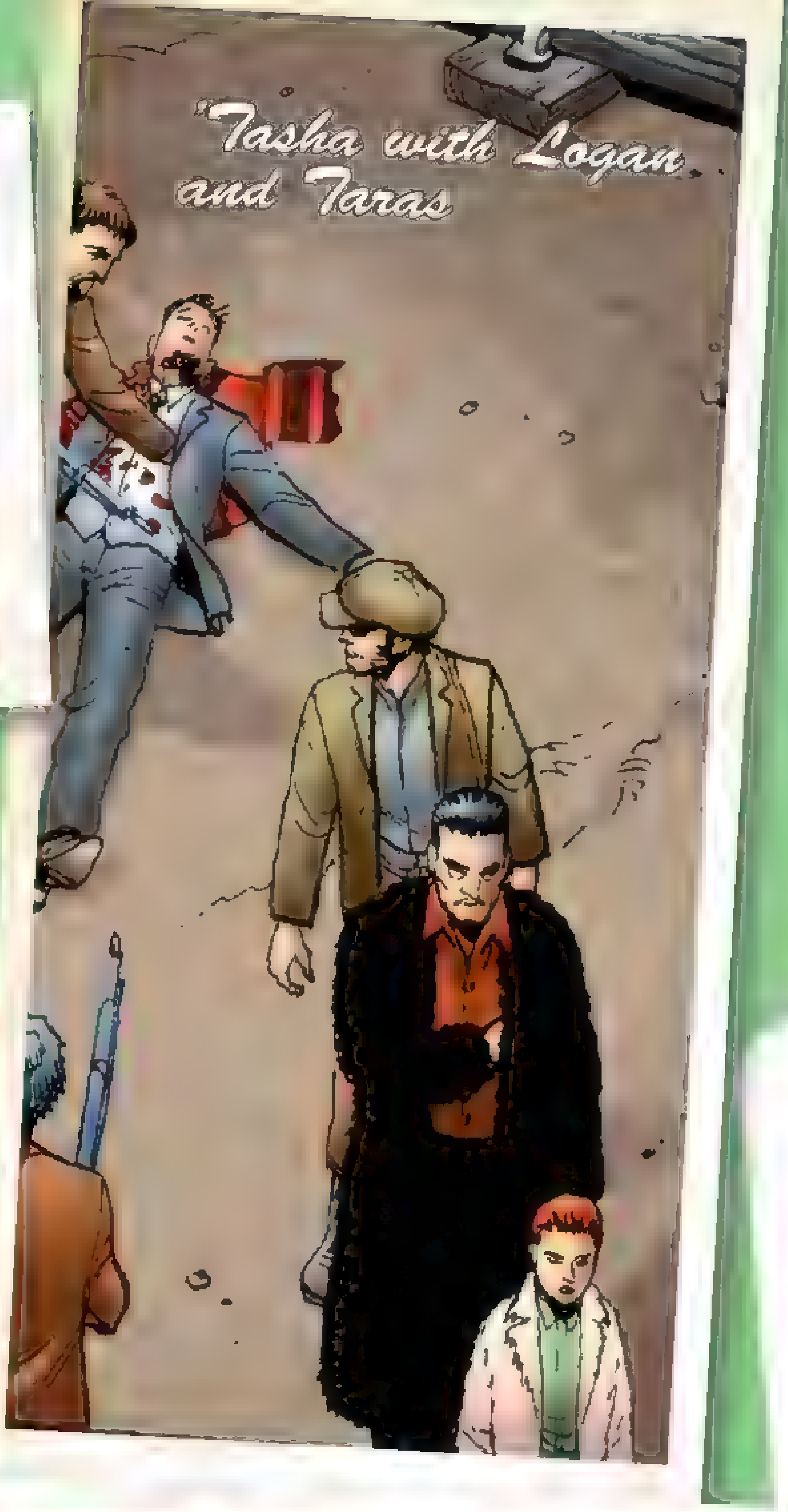
I HAVE TO ADMIT...
...UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, THIS MIGHT SEEM LIKE *OVERKILL.*
NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BE NICE RIGHT ABOUT NOW.
WILL YOUR COMMANDER ROGERS AGREE WITH YOUR COURSE OF ACTION?
WASN'T HIS CALL.
THIS WAS *MY* OPERATION.
WELL, AT THE VERY LEAST, YOU'VE SAVED THE LIVES OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE.
THAT'S A VICTORY WORTH CELEBRATING!
IF THAT'S THE CASE, PEREGRINE...

...THEN WHY DOES IT FEEL SO HOLLOW?

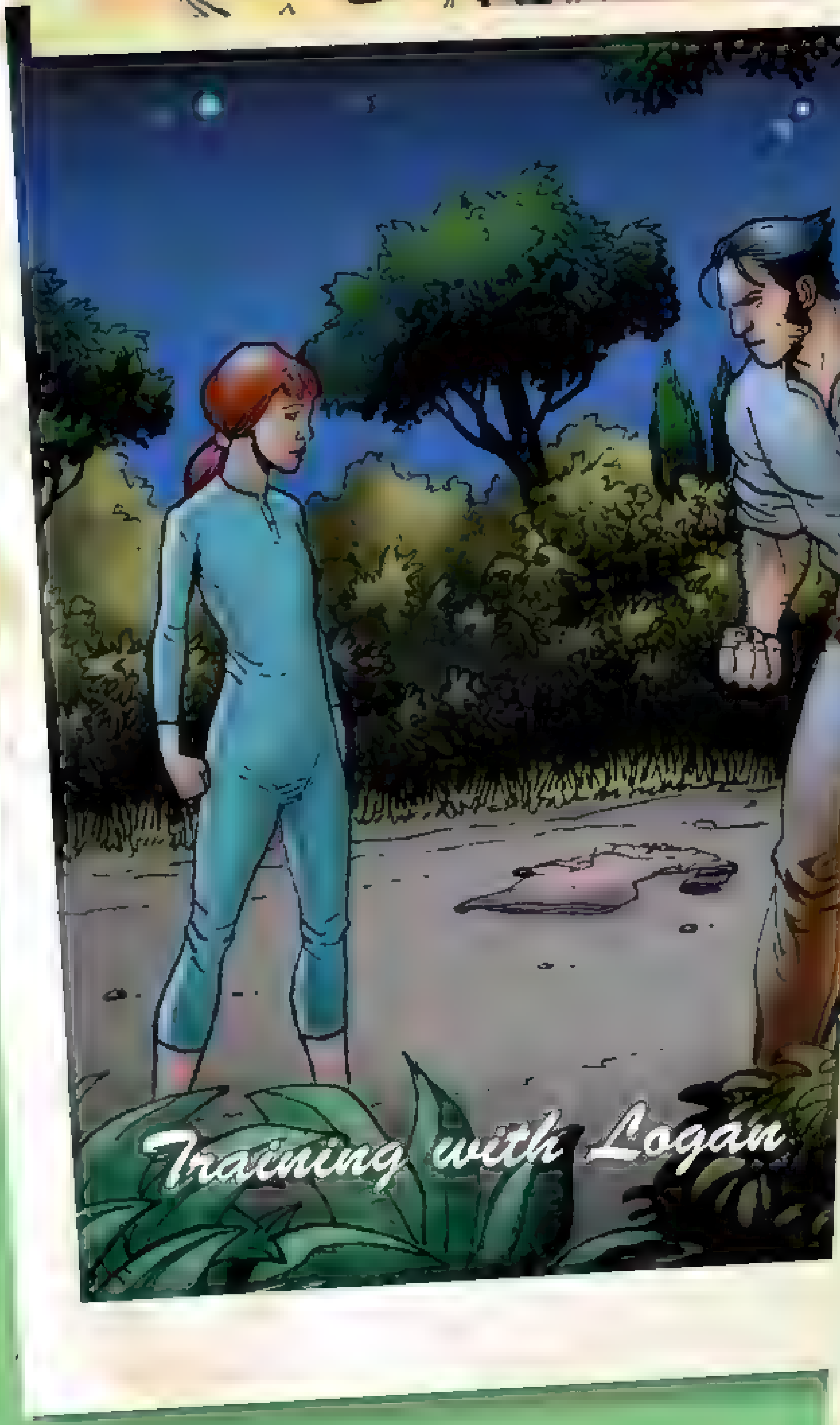
BLACK WIDOW FILES
THE EARLY YEARS



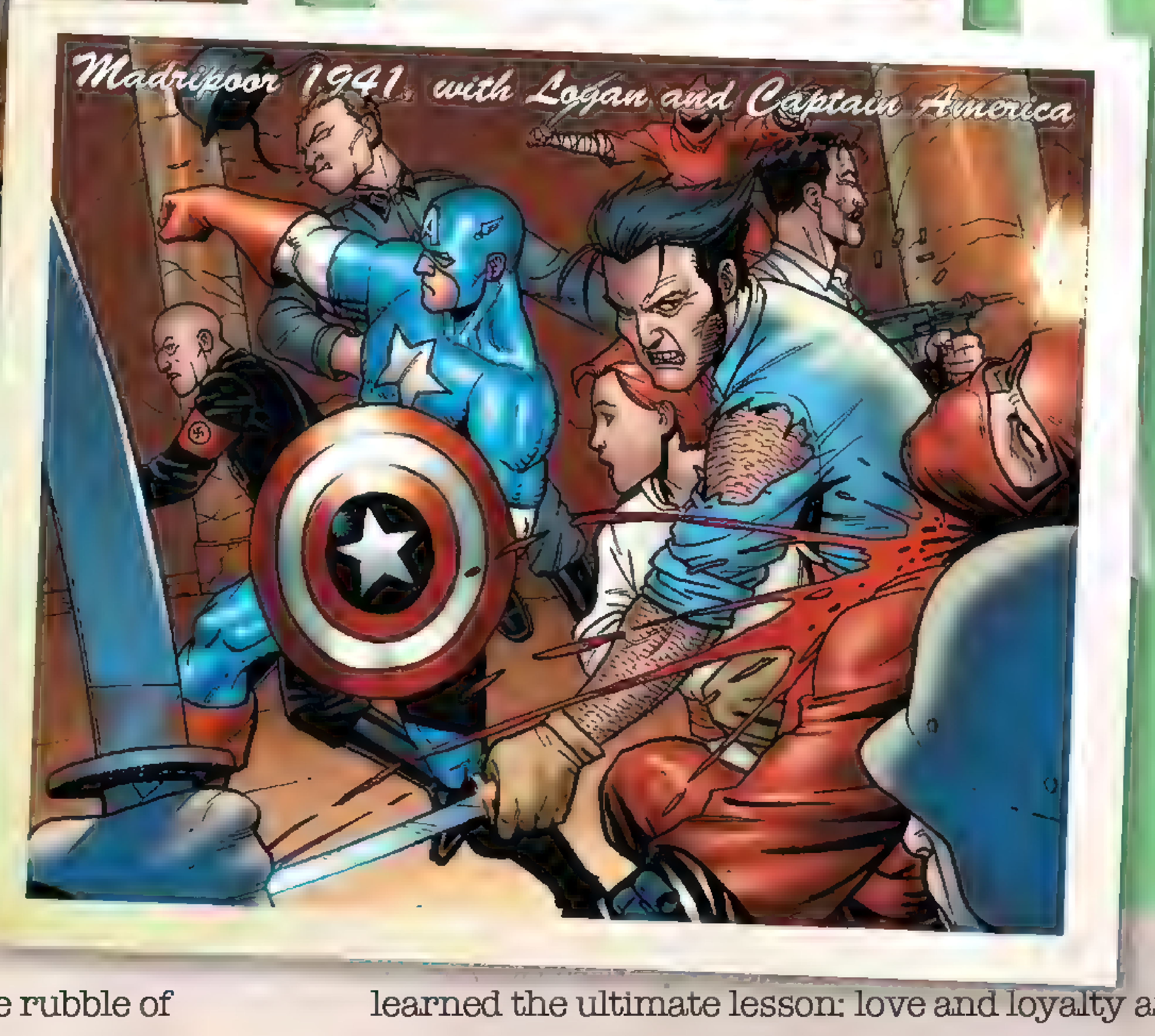
Natasha meets Logan



Tasha with Logan and Taras



Training with Logan



Madripoor 1941, with Logan and Captain America

...Stalingrad, Russia, 1928 — from the rubble of a blown-out, burning building, the infant Natalia Romanova was lifted to safety into the arms of Ivan Petrovich.

...Ten years later, Stalin himself took the girl from Ivan's loving care and turned her over to the master spy Taras Romanoff.

...Convinced by Romanoff she was his daughter, "Natasha Romanoff" took to his school's training eagerly, soaking up the tools of the spy trade: stealth strategies, self-defense, knifeplay, information trading.

...There, she met a would-be pupil of Taras, the drifter Logan, from whom she learned hand-to-hand combat, tracking, and no-holds-barred, martial arts. She also learned her first lesson in betrayal: her "father" Taras had secretly assigned her to kill Logan, though her adopted "Little Uncle" Logan killed Taras first, fulfilling his mission of assassination. (1)

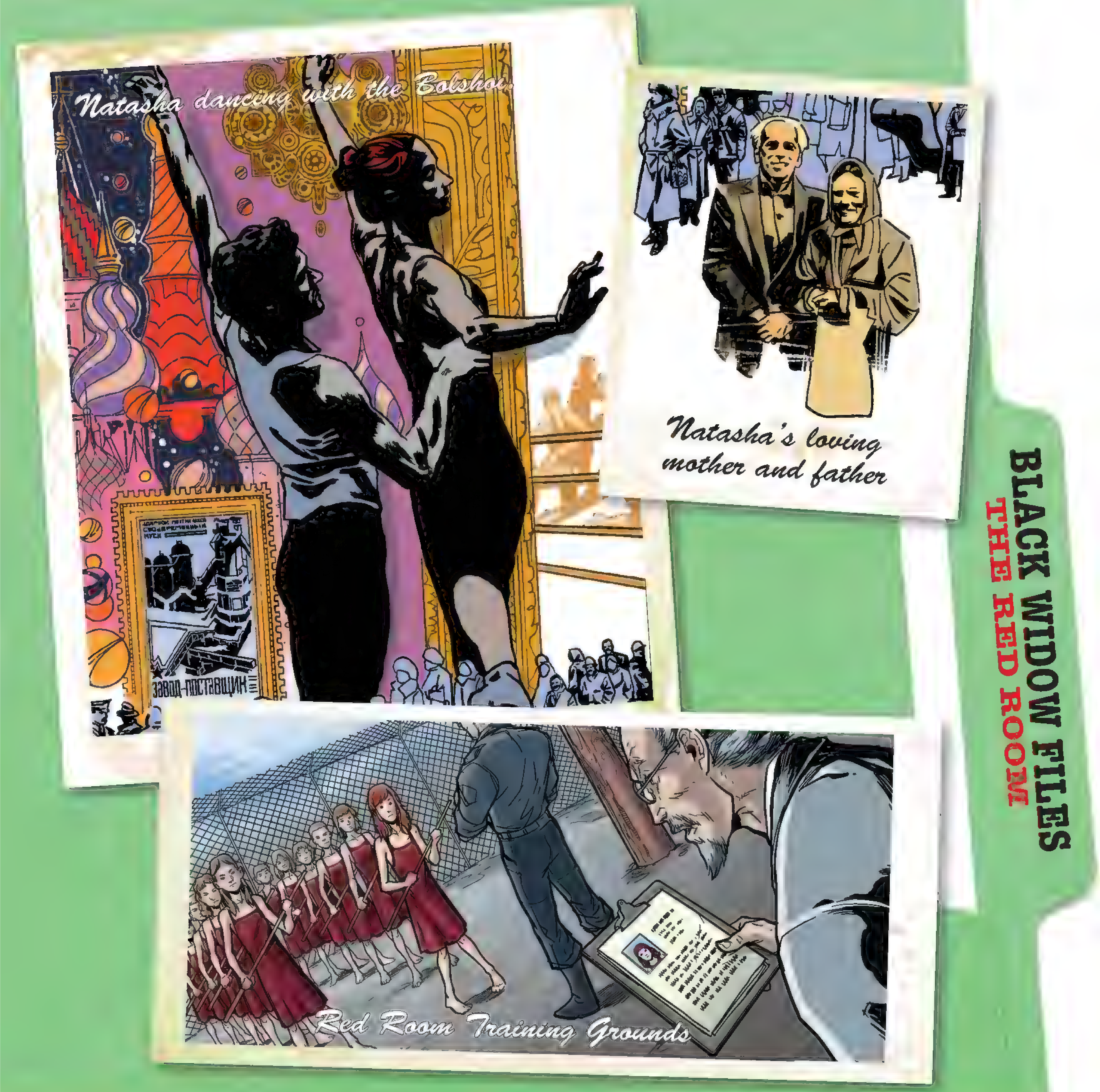
...Taras Romanoff's death was a massacre. In it, she learned the ultimate lesson: love and loyalty are of great value, and thus a great bargaining chip.

...She was found wandering the Siberian wilderness by Ivan Petrovich and taken back into his custody. By this time, the girl, barely a teenager, was proficient in the art of the assassin and the craft of the spy – proven by her mission to kill the leader of the ninja clan the Hand, the Jonin, in 1941 at Madripoor.

....Natasha found herself allied with Captain America and brushed up once again with Logan and his life's disorienting patterns. His experience would be an object lesson for the girl's future, though she could not know it at the time.... (2,3)

(1) Wolverine: Origins Vol. 2 – Savior HC/TP
(2) Marvel Visionaries: Chris Claremont HC
(3) Wolverine: Origins Vol. 4 – Our War HC/TP

BLACK WIDOW FILES
THE RED ROOM


Natasha dancing with the Bolshoi.
ЗАВОД-ПОСТАВЩИК
Natasha's loving mother and father
Red Room Training Grounds

...At some point after this epochal event in her life, Natasha fell under the sway of Lyudmila Kudrin, scientist, Soviet, and svengali of the Black Widow Program. Along with dozens of other orphaned teen girls, Natasha received an intense regimen of biology-enhancing chemicals – not unlike America's Super-Soldier serum – that gave her an extra-human immune system and heightened endurance levels.

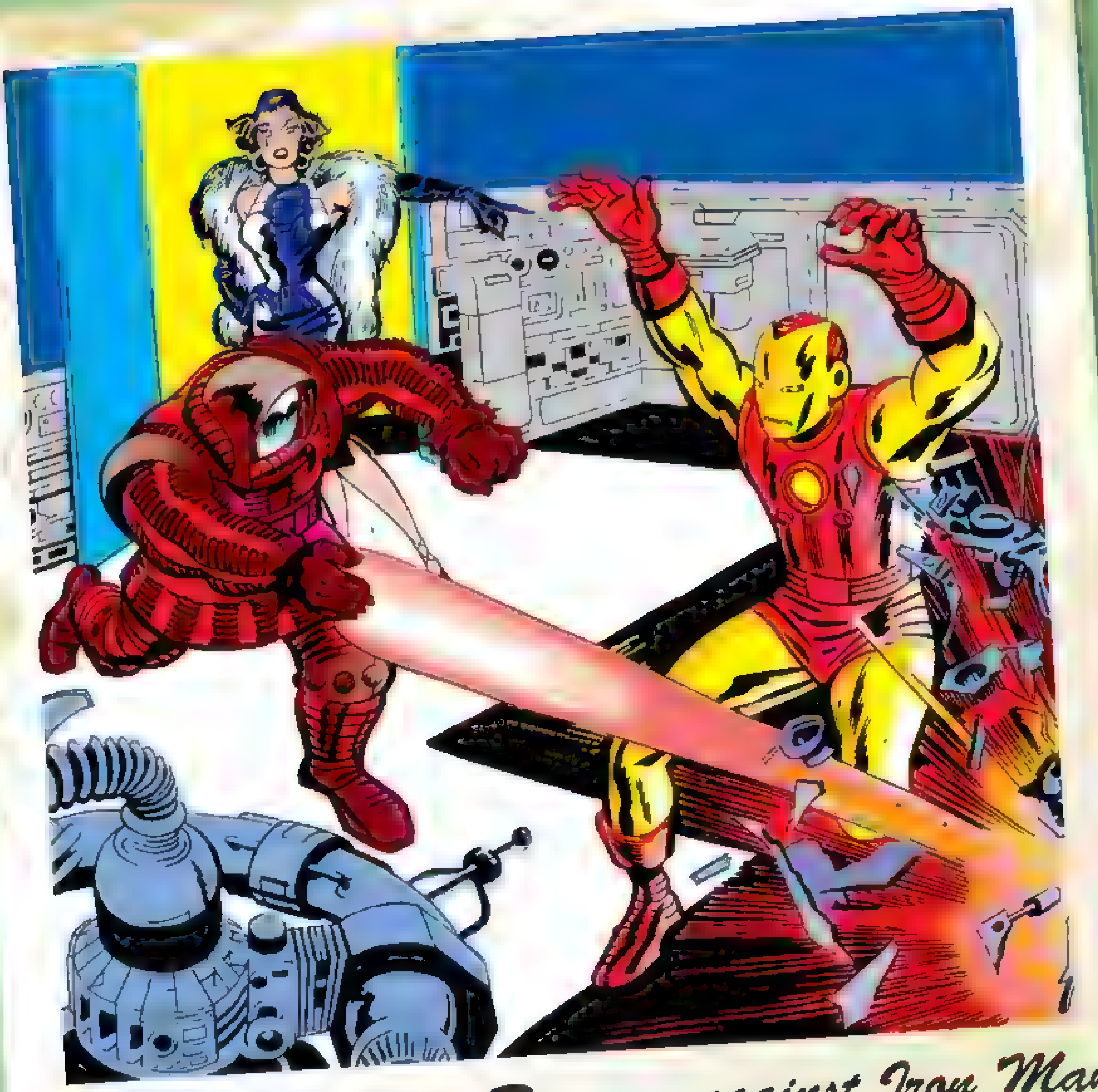
...The dark side of the Red Room came in the form of a cascade of false memories: parents that were not hers, friends that never existed, a career as a Bolshoi ballerina that never happened, and a patriotic zeal for her homeland (enhanced by brainwashing and pheromone-like chemicals) that was merely a tool for further manipulation.

...Combined with the training she'd already received from Taras Romanoff and her "Little Uncle" Logan, Natasha's Red Room skills set her on the path to become one of the world's top stealth agents. (1)

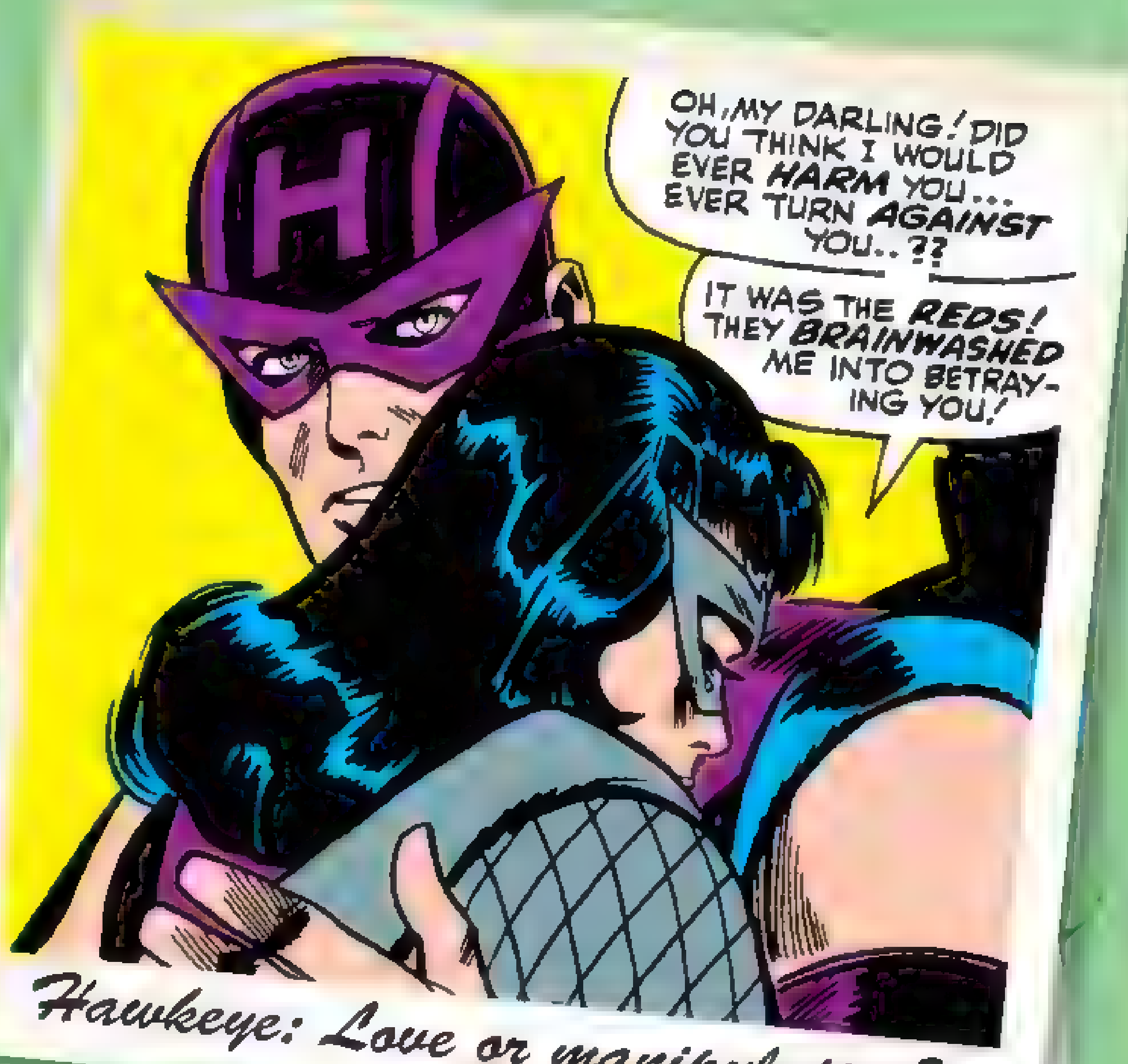
...Berlin, 1956: Natasha and her loyal caretaker, Ivan Petrovich, were victims of a savage beating. With Ivan near death, both were given the gift of a life-prolonging chemical from the Russian agent Winter Soldier (Bucky Barnes). Shortly thereafter, she and Barnes became lovers.

...By 1958, she was forced to break off relations with the Winter Soldier, and married Alexei Shostakov, Russian test pilot and national hero. Despite the marriage being an orchestration of the Kremlin, Natasha fell deeply in love with Alexei. Thus, when she was informed by her overseers that her husband had died in an experimental rocket test, Natasha was devastated, and threw herself into her new duties as a Soviet superspy and saboteur... (2)

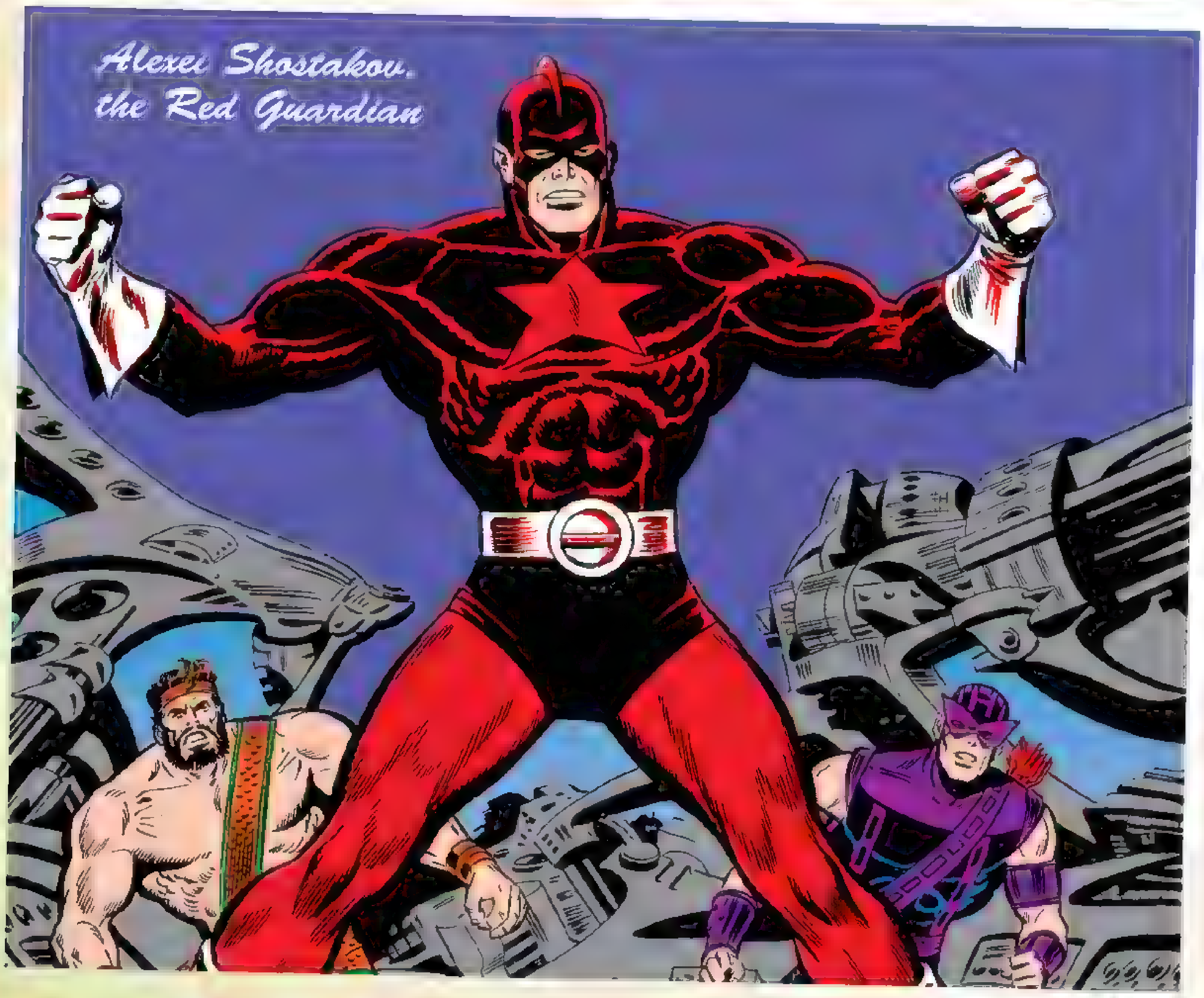
(1) **Black Widow: Homecoming TP**
(2) **Avengers Masterworks Vol. 5 HC**



With the Crimson Dynamo against Iron Man


OH, MY DARLING! DID YOU THINK I WOULD EVER HARM YOU... EVER TURN AGAINST YOU..??
IT WAS THE REDS! THEY BRAINWASHED ME INTO BETRAYING YOU!

Hawkeye: Love or manipulation?



Alexei Shostakov, the Red Guardian

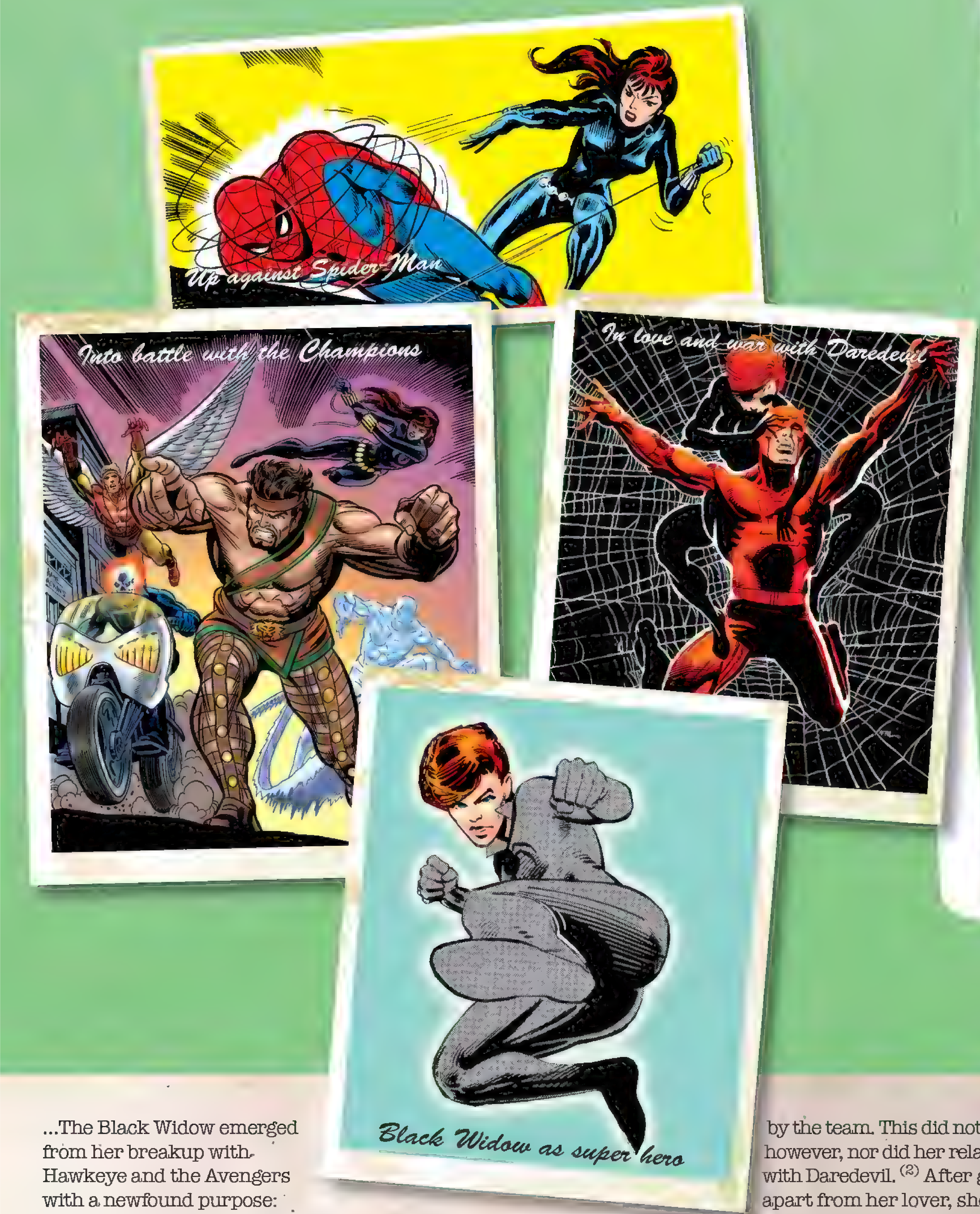
...Over the next decades, Natasha flitted about the European social scene, drawing brilliant and wealthy tech developers into her web and then siphoning their secrets to her Soviet bosses. It was only natural that at some point she would set her sights on the most brilliant and wealthy of them all – Tony Stark.

...Spurning her romantic advances, Stark earned the impetuous wrath of the Black Widow. With the costumed rogue Hawkeye alongside to help her bring down Stark Enterprises, she waged a campaign of harassment against the billionaire technologist and his armored bodyguard, Iron Man, and took every opportunity to sabotage his facilities. (1)

...Her romance with Hawkeye started as a simple manipulation of the impressionable young man on behalf of her Communist employers. But when the villain went legit as a member of the Avengers, the Black Widow defected and followed him over to the side of good once and for all. Emerging from a brainwashing that forced her to set the Swordsman and Power Man against the Avengers, she bonded with Hawkeye and established an uneasy relationship with the wary team. (2)

...Convinced of her skills as a super spy, Nick Fury drafted her into S.H.I.E.L.D. as a freelance agent. She uncovered a plot by the Sons of the Serpent and aided the Avengers against the Ultroids. But she also discovered that her "late" husband Alexei Shostakov was alive as the Soviet super hero, the Red Guardian. The shock of her brush with Alexei sent her into a deep reflection about her future, and she retired from the Avengers before they could place her on the team roster... (3)

(1) **Essential Iron Man Vol. 1 TP/**
Iron Man Omnibus Vol. 1 HC
(2) **Avengers Masterworks Vol. 3 HC**
(3) **Avengers Masterworks Vol. 4 HC**



Up against Spider-Man

Into battle with the Champions

In love and war with Daredevil

Black Widow as super hero

...The Black Widow emerged from her breakup with Hawkeye and the Avengers with a newfound purpose: to fight crime using her formidable skills. She practiced her new pursuit against Spider-Man, trying to take his measure as a super hero while donning a trendy new all-black costume. (1)

...Next, with longtime aide Ivan Petrovich by her side, she fought the super villains the Astrologer and Watchlord, and on behalf of a band of youthful community organizers. (1)

...Emboldened by her initial forays at fighting crime, she and Ivan left New York City for San Francisco, where a series of events led to her teaming up with blind super hero, Daredevil, himself a recent émigré to the West Coast. It was the beginning of a long relationship with Matt Murdock, one in which they eventually became lovers.

... After a brief relocation to New York City and a fight alongside the Avengers, she was granted membership by the team. This did not last, however, nor did her relationship with Daredevil. (2) After growing apart from her lover, she left San Francisco for Los Angeles, where she took over the leadership of the Champions, an ad hoc group of crime fighters including Ghost Rider, Iceman, Angel and eventual lover, Hercules. (3)

...The Champions folded, and Natasha was back in action for S.H.I.E.L.D. against Iron Maiden (4), reunited with Daredevil to fight Bullseye (5), and also fought with her former lover against the Hand, the ninja clan bent of resurrecting Elektra. (6)

(1) **Black Widow: The Sting of the Widow HC**
(2) **Essential Daredevil Vol. 4-5 TP**
(3) **Champions Classic Vol. 2-3 TP**
(4) **Black Widow: Web of Intrigue HC**
(5) **Daredevil Visionaries: Frank Miller Vol. 1 TP**
(6) **Daredevil Visionaries: Frank Miller Vol. 3 TP**

The Widow and the Devil's Child

Widows Romanoff and Belova

New model Natasha

... Natasha closed down the first phase of her super hero life as leader of the Avengers. After a long association with the team, the leadership was finally hers. It was under her command, however, when several of her teammates were seemingly killed in action. It would be revealed later that her teammates had been shunted off to an alternate universe, but during the time they were missing, it was the Black Widow who had to shut down the activities of Earth's Mightiest Heroes. (1)

...Stung by her failure, she descended into depression and erratic behavior. Reuniting with Daredevil didn't help much, as she was soon drafted into the role of protector of an infant child her former lover had decided was the Anti-Christ and seemingly hell-bent on killing. (2)

...Natasha's life was about to get further complicated. Dropping out of the super hero life, abandoning her venom blasters and other super hero accoutrements, she reentered the world of spying and international intrigue. It wasn't long before she became aware of a new Black Widow, the Red Room graduate Yelena Belova. Though not as experienced as her idol, Belova was far more aggressive and tenaciously desirous of supplanting Natasha as the premier Black Widow. Thinking the girl dangerously callow, Natasha hatched a plot to take her appearance and drive her mad, the better to caution the girl into slowing down her foolhardy pursuit of glory. (3)

...Episodes like these showcased the new side of Black Widow: hard-bitten, world-weary and not ready to suffer fools. Though very desirous of retirement from the super hero game, action kept calling her name. During missions to Russia and Cuba, she discovered the secrets of her Red Room tutelage under Lyudmila Kudrin, then tracked down the misuse of Kudrin's biotechnology in a Cuban slave mill run by the Gynacon pharmaceutical corporation... (4,5)

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(1) **Avengers Assemble Vol. 2 HC**
(2) **Daredevil: Guardian Devil HC/TP**
(3) **Black Widow TP**
(4) **Black Widow: Homecoming TP**
(5) **Black Widow: The Things They Say About Her TP**

BLACK WIDOW FILES
THE DEADLIEST DAYS

The Widow and the Winter Soldier

Mighty Avengers

A deadly origin

- (1) **Civil War HC**
- (2) **Mighty Avengers Assemble HC**
- (3) **Captain America: The Death of Captain America Omnibus HC**
- (4) **Reborn HC**
- (5) **Invincible Iron Man Vol. 1 HC**
- (6) **Black Widow: Deadly Origin HC**

...The last few years have been the most turbulent in the life of Natasha Romanoff. With a skill set such as hers, the world of super heroes is always pulling her back in to make use of her expertise and relentlessness. When the call for super-powered beings to register with the United States government gained steam, Iron Man became the spokesman for the pro-Registration side. And Black Widow joined him, fighting against the likes of Spider-Man, Luke Cage and Captain America. (1)

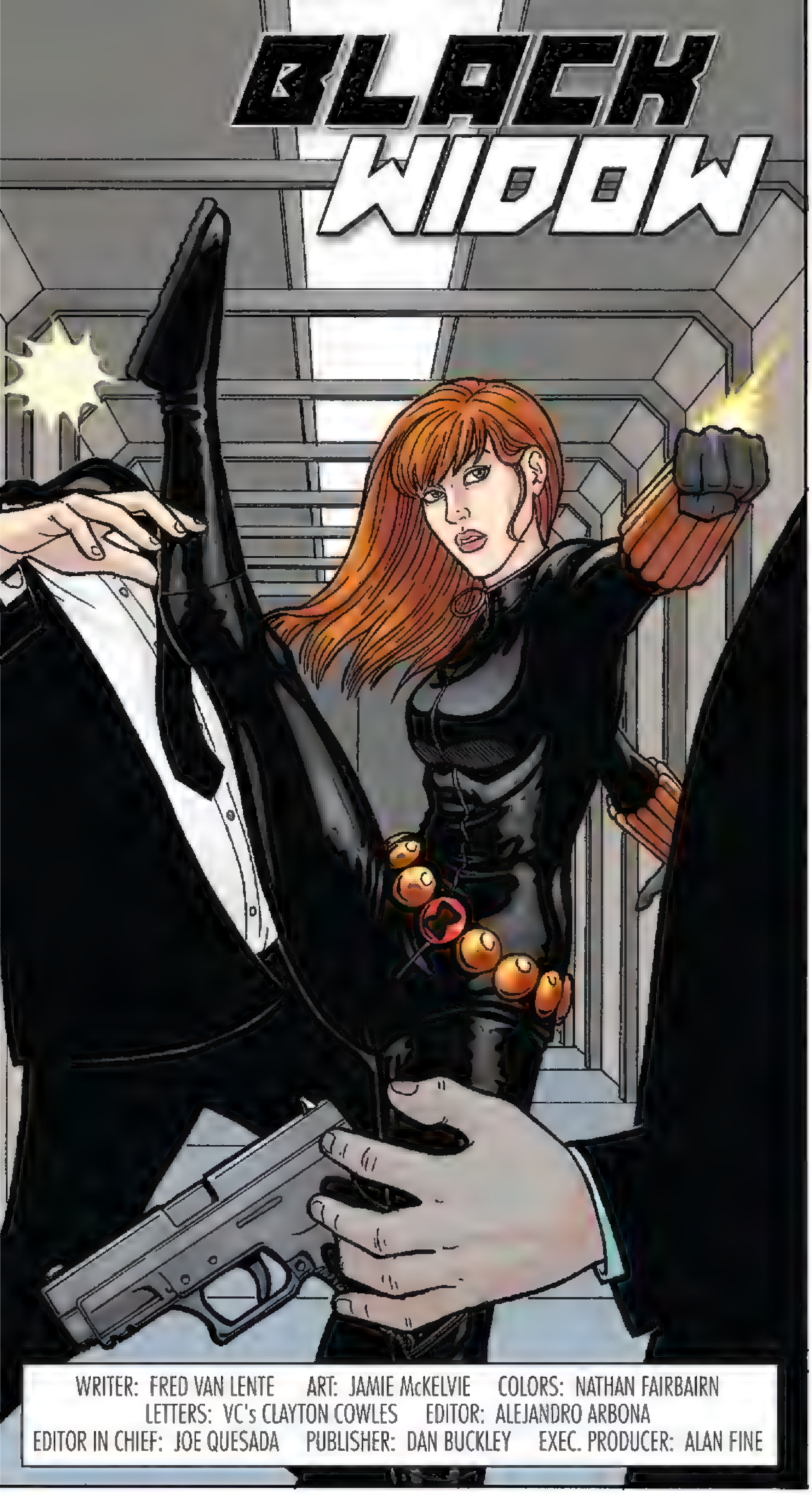
...With victory in the Civil War behind him, Iron Man reconstituted the Avengers, assembling a dream team of heroes including Ms. Marvel, Ares, Sentry and Black Widow. In the team's first adventures, they faced the return of Ultron and the onset of the Skrull invasion. (2)

...After the apparent assassination of Steve Rogers, in the wake of his arrest for crimes related to the Civil War, Black Widow came across her old love, Bucky Barnes, now returned as the Winter Soldier and seeking justice against the killer of Captain America. Swept up in the drama alongside Barnes, who would eventually don the costume and wield the shield of his mentor, Steve Rogers, Black Widow has been the most ardent fighting companion of the new Captain America. And just as they rekindled the long-dormant love they had once shared with each other, the Black Widow and the new Captain America also helped restore Steve Rogers' consciousness to his body, foiling the Red Skull's twisted plot. (3, 4)

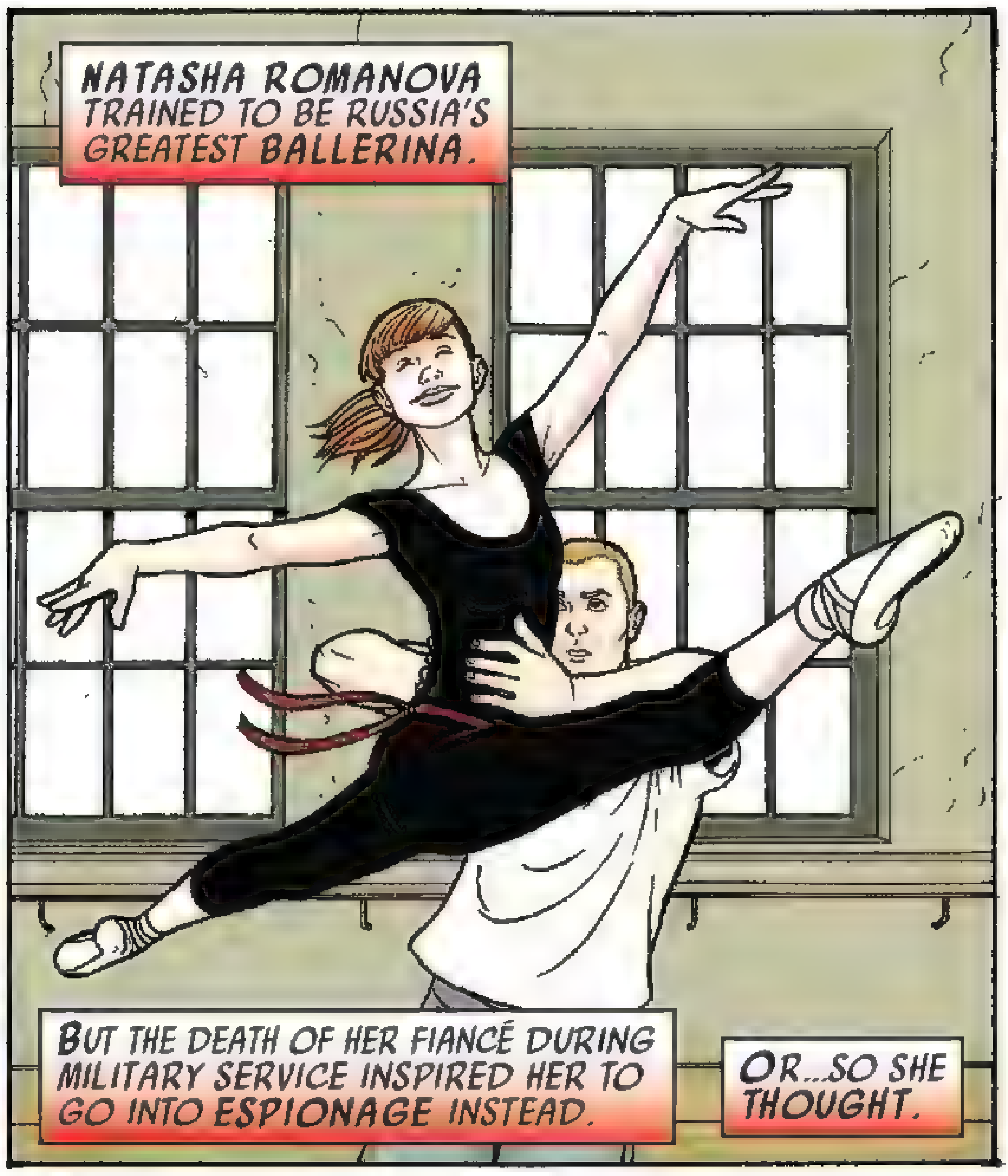
...But now, after aiding Pepper Potts and Maria Hill in their race to save the life of Tony Stark (5), the Black Widow has come face to face with the reality of her unforgiving origin; the extent to which her past has haunted her in the form of a deadly disease afflicted upon her by one of her most trusted friends. How she will recover emotionally from this revelation, to rebound in time to face down Norman Osborn's Siege or take on any other new threats, will be one of the most deadly webs Natasha has ever had to untangle...

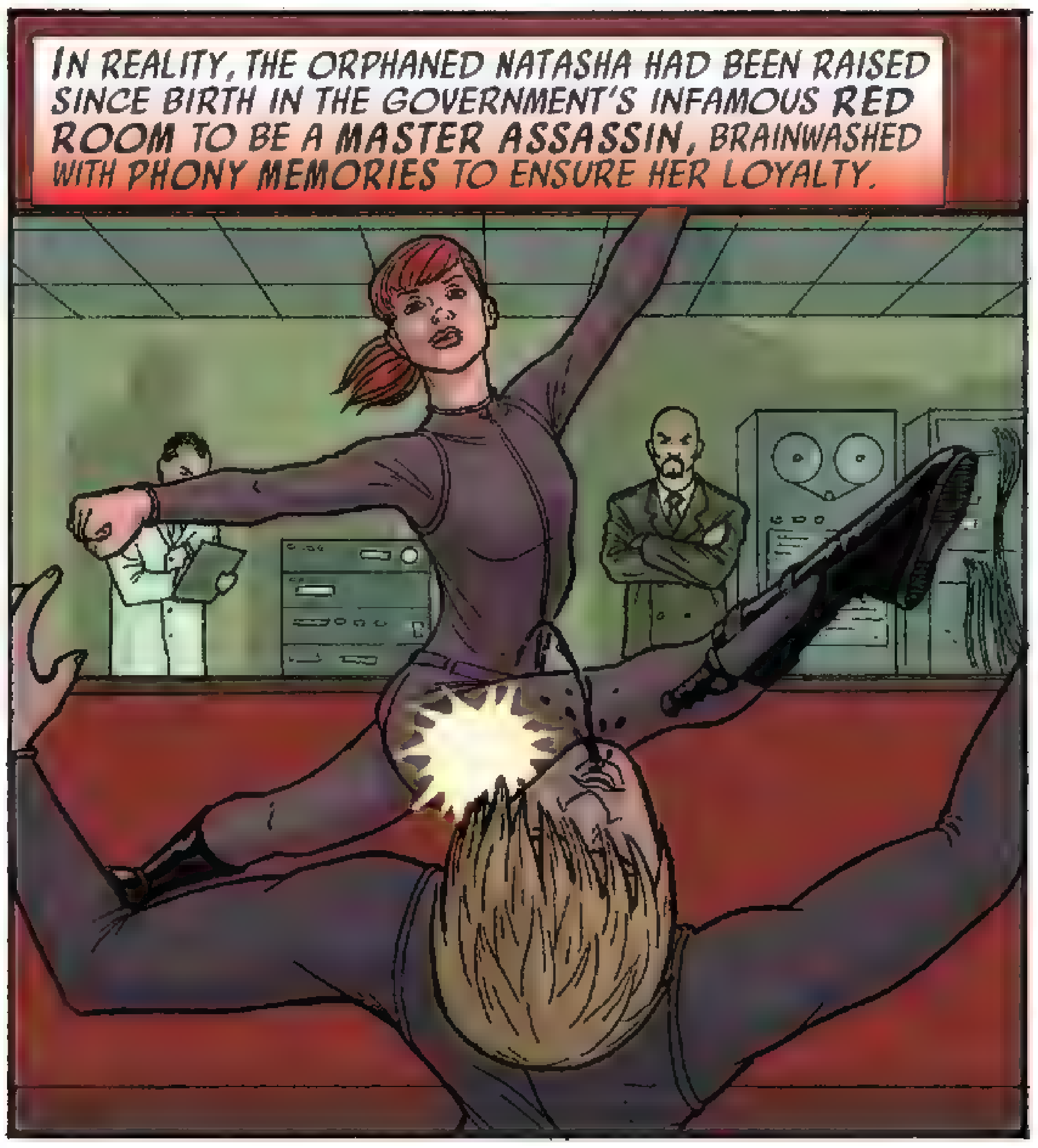
Written by **John Rhett Thomas**
Design by **Michael Kronenberg**

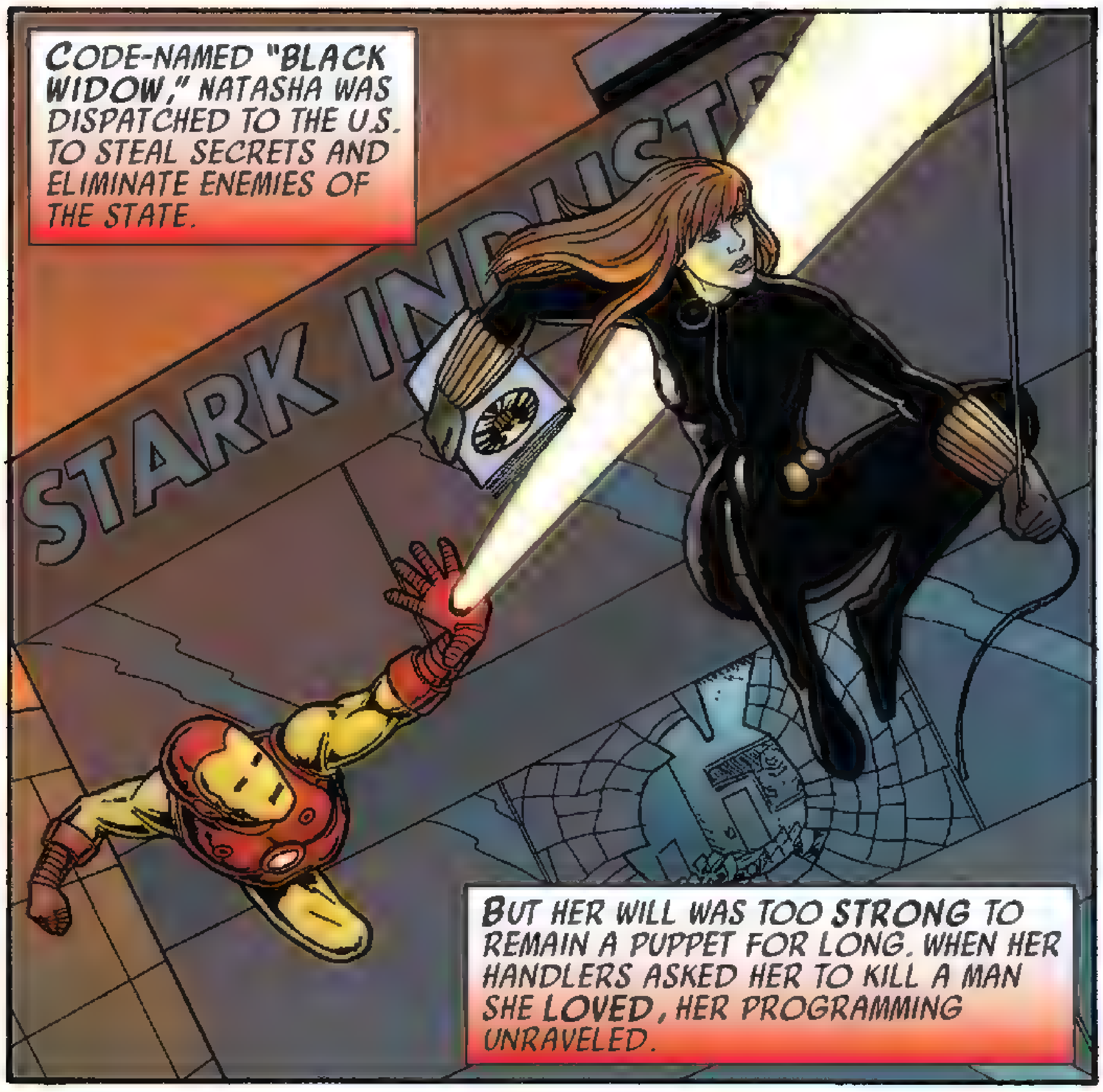
BLACK WIDOW

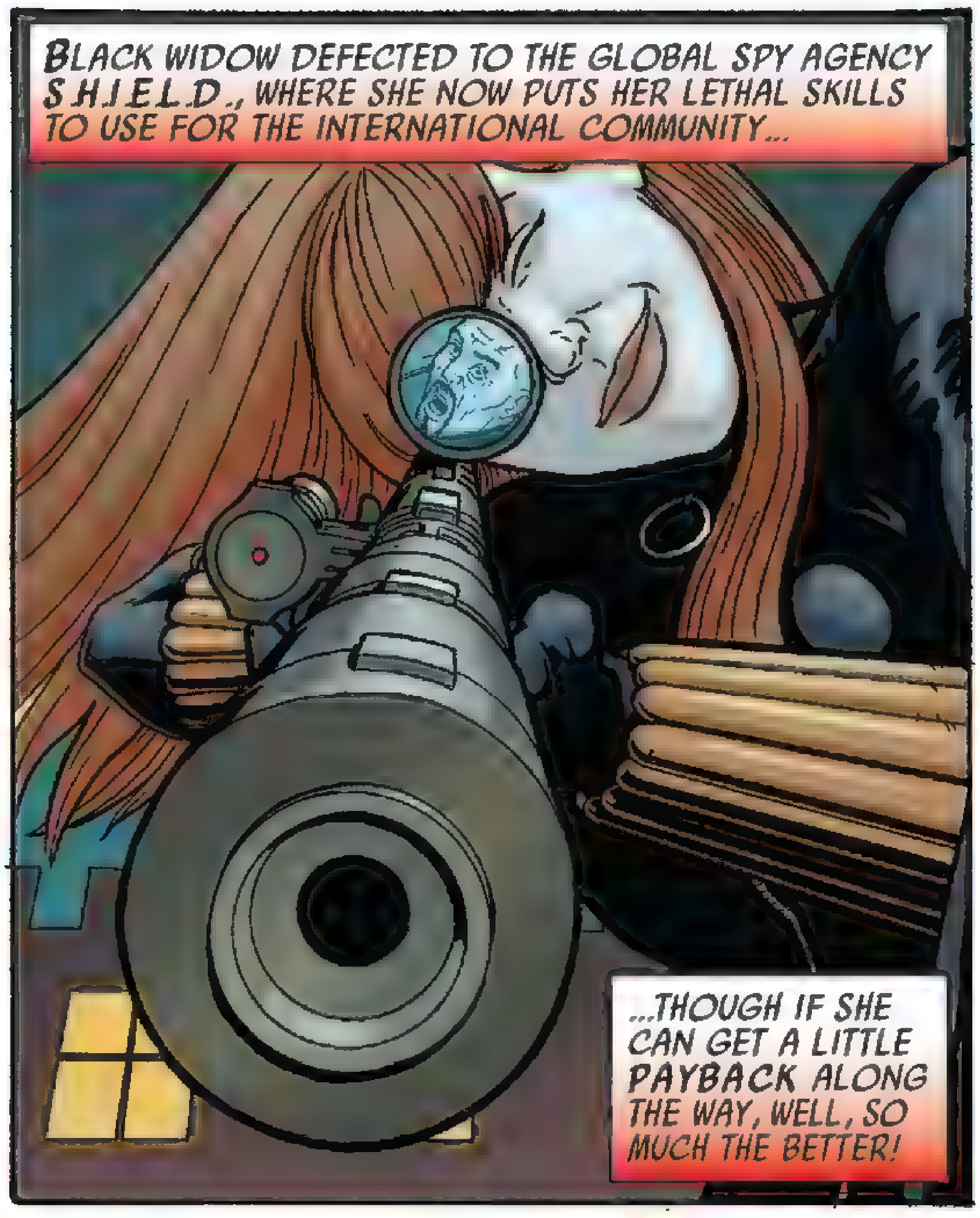


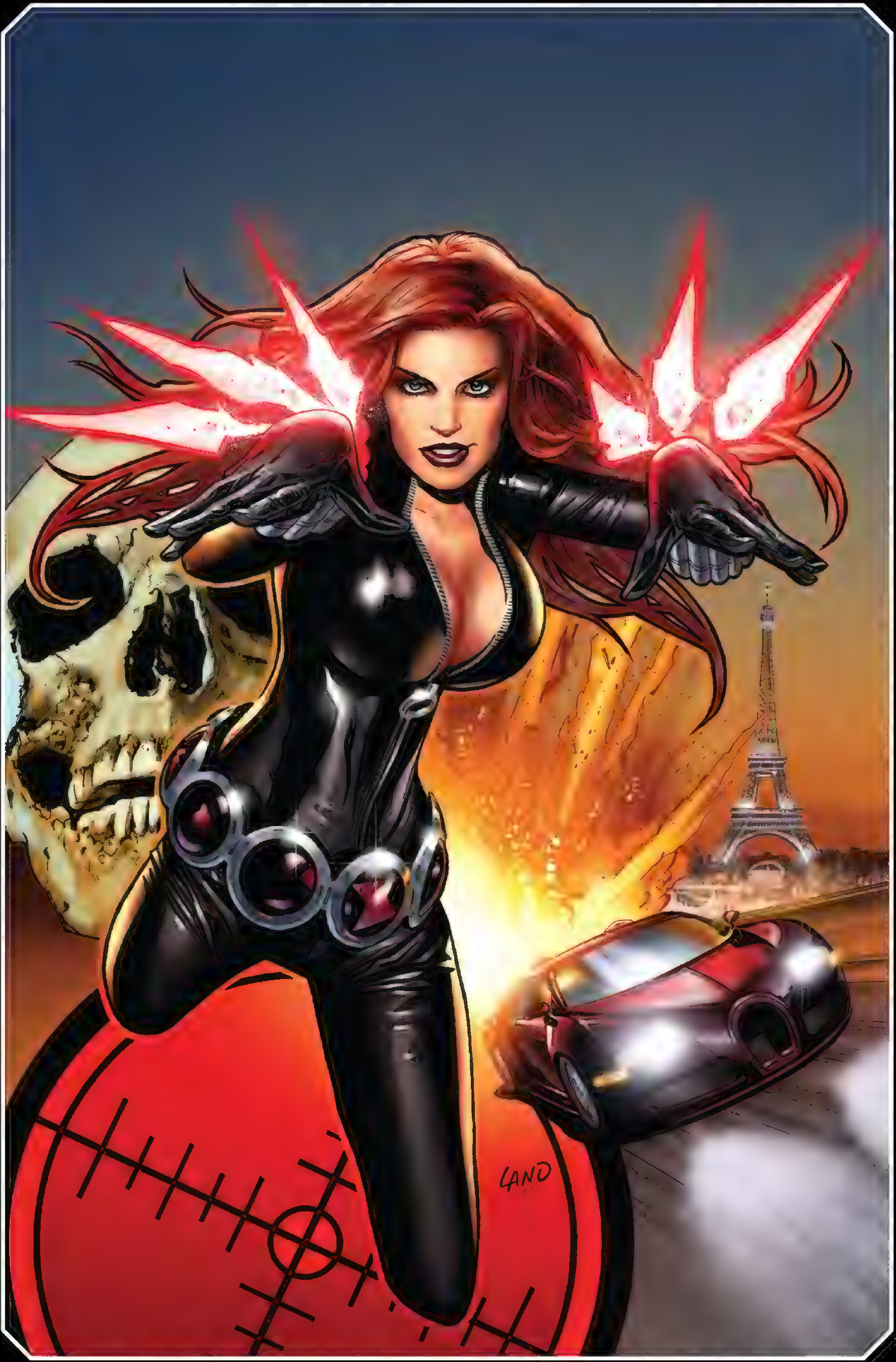
WRITER: FRED VAN LENTE ART: JAMIE McKELVIE COLORS: NATHAN FAIRBAIRN
LETTERS: VC's CLAYTON COWLES EDITOR: ALEJANDRO ARBONA
EDITOR IN CHIEF: JOE QUESADA PUBLISHER: DAN BUCKLEY EXEC. PRODUCER: ALAN FINE


NATASHA ROMANOVA TRAINED TO BE RUSSIA'S GREATEST BALLERINA.
BUT THE DEATH OF HER FIANCÉ DURING MILITARY SERVICE INSPIRED HER TO GO INTO ESPIONAGE INSTEAD.
OR...SO SHE THOUGHT.


IN REALITY, THE ORPHANED NATASHA HAD BEEN RAISED SINCE BIRTH IN THE GOVERNMENT'S INFAMOUS RED ROOM TO BE A MASTER ASSASSIN, BRAINWASHED WITH PHONY MEMORIES TO ENSURE HER LOYALTY.

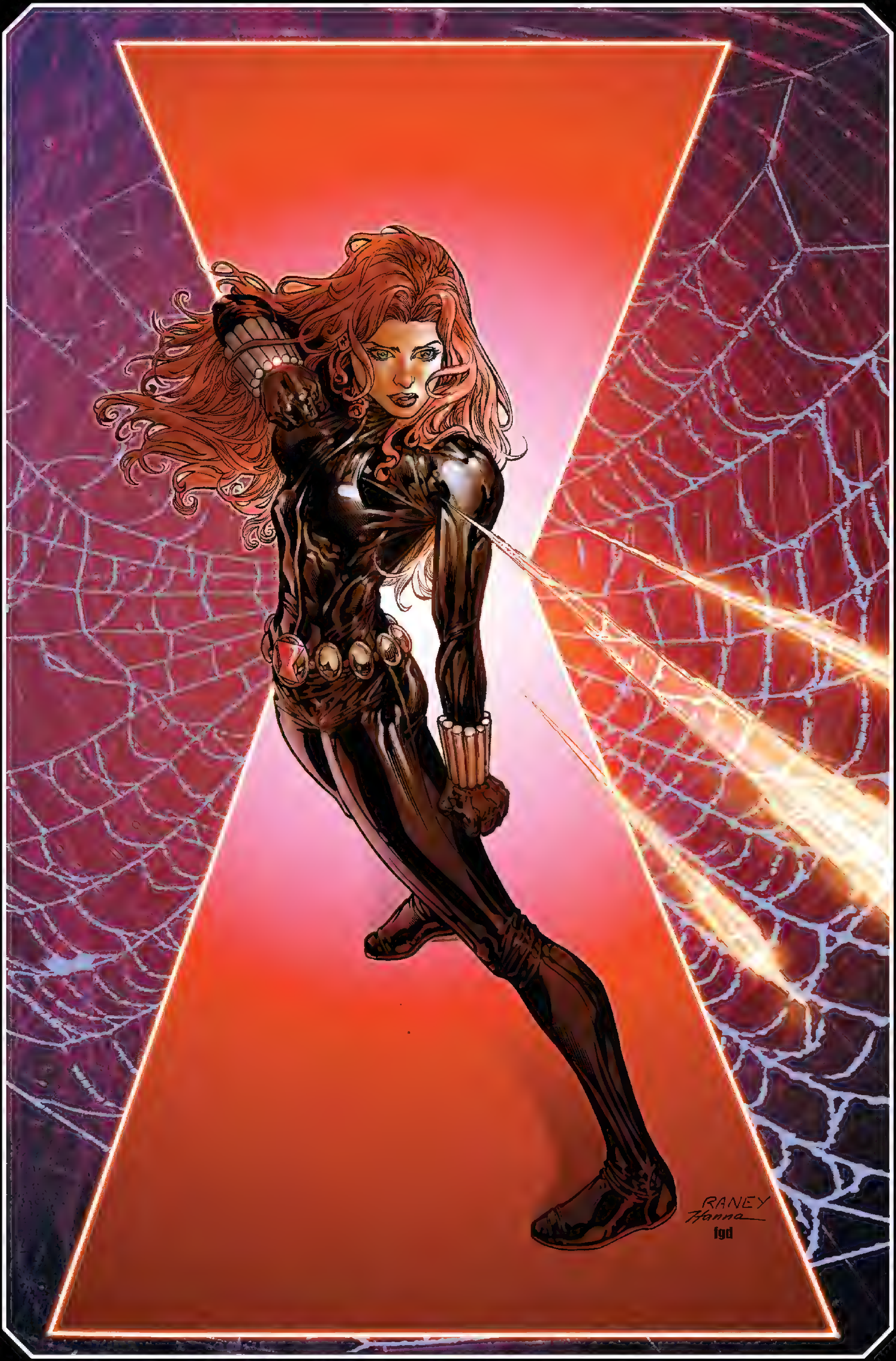

CODE-NAMED "BLACK WIDOW," NATASHA WAS DISPATCHED TO THE U.S. TO STEAL SECRETS AND ELIMINATE ENEMIES OF THE STATE.
STARK INDUSTR
BUT HER WILL WAS TOO STRONG TO REMAIN A PUPPET FOR LONG. WHEN HER HANDLERS ASKED HER TO KILL A MAN SHE LOVED, HER PROGRAMMING UNRAVELED.


BLACK WIDOW DEFECTED TO THE GLOBAL SPY AGENCY S.H.I.E.L.D., WHERE SHE NOW PUTS HER LETHAL SKILLS TO USE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY...
...THOUGH IF SHE CAN GET A LITTLE PAYBACK ALONG THE WAY, WELL, SO MUCH THE BETTER!



BLACK WIDOW: DEADLY ORIGIN #1 VARIANT BY

GREG LAND & JUSTIN PONSOR

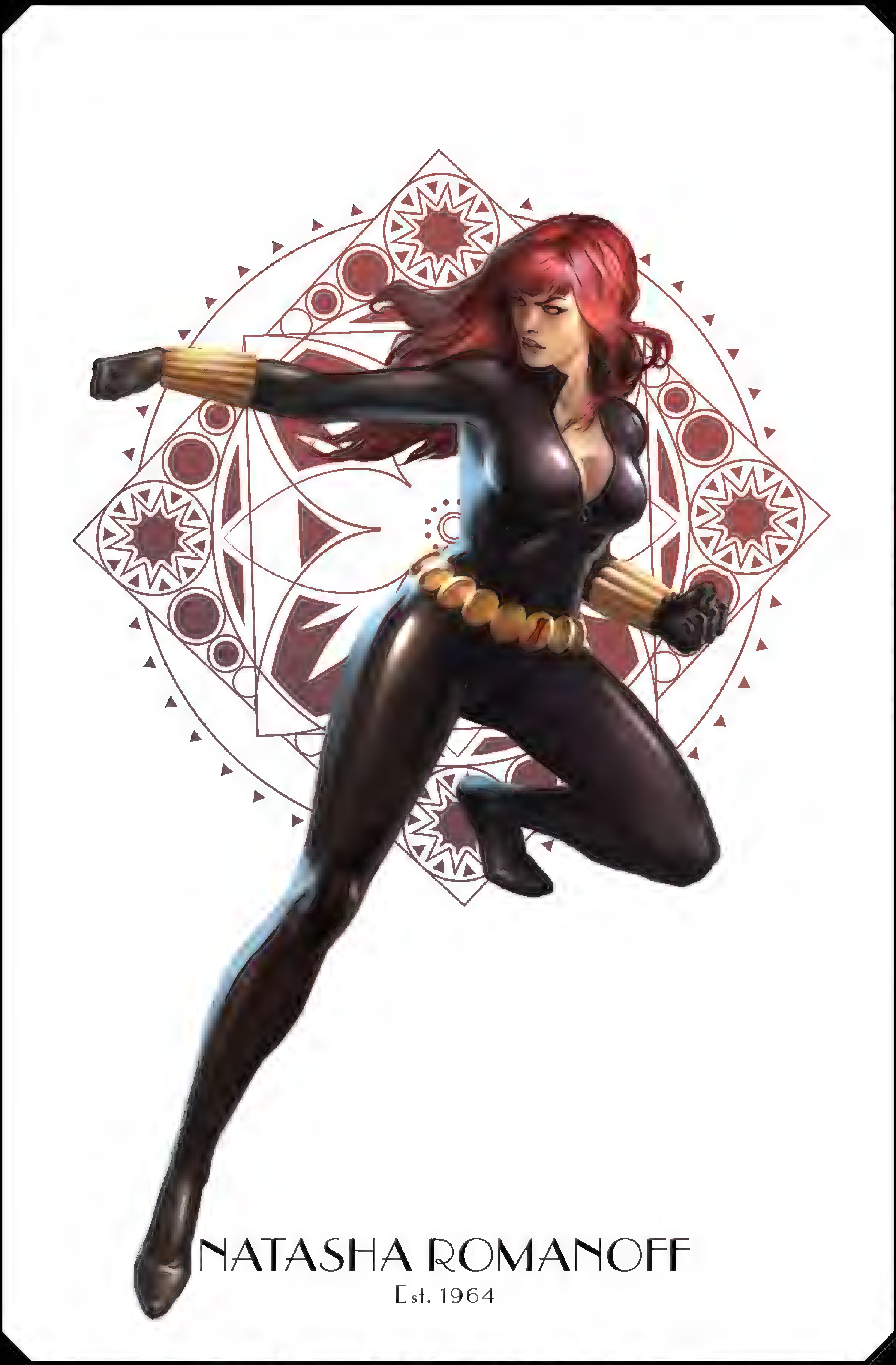

RANEY
Hanna
fgd

BLACK WIDOW: DEADLY ORIGIN #1 VARIANT BY

TOM RANEY, SCOTT HANNA & FRANK D'ARMATA

BLACK WIDOW: DEADLY ORIGIN #2 VARIANT BY

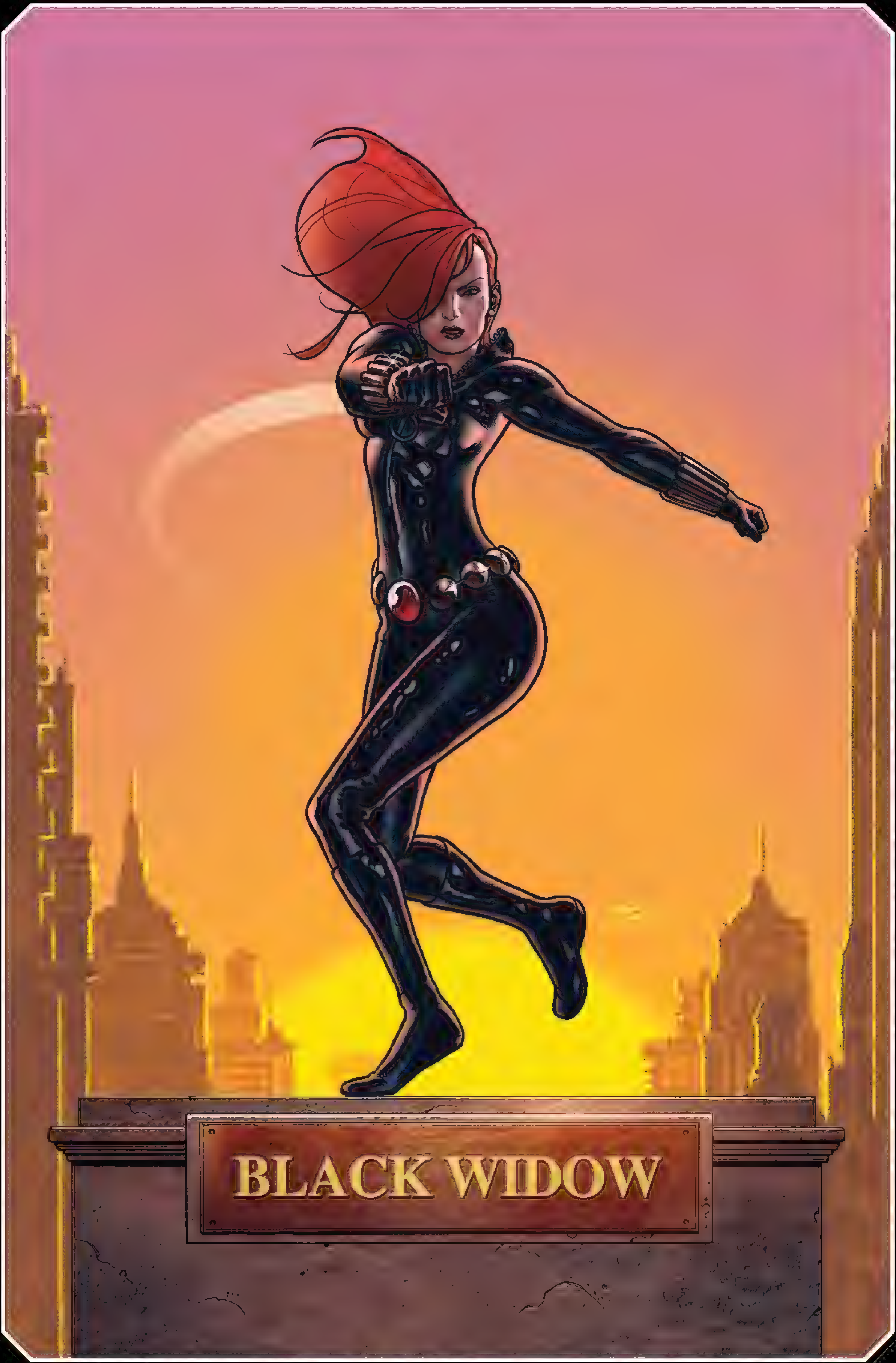
ADI GRANOV


NATASHA ROMANOFF
Est. 1964

BLACK WIDOW #1 WOMEN OF MARVEL FRAME VARIANT BY

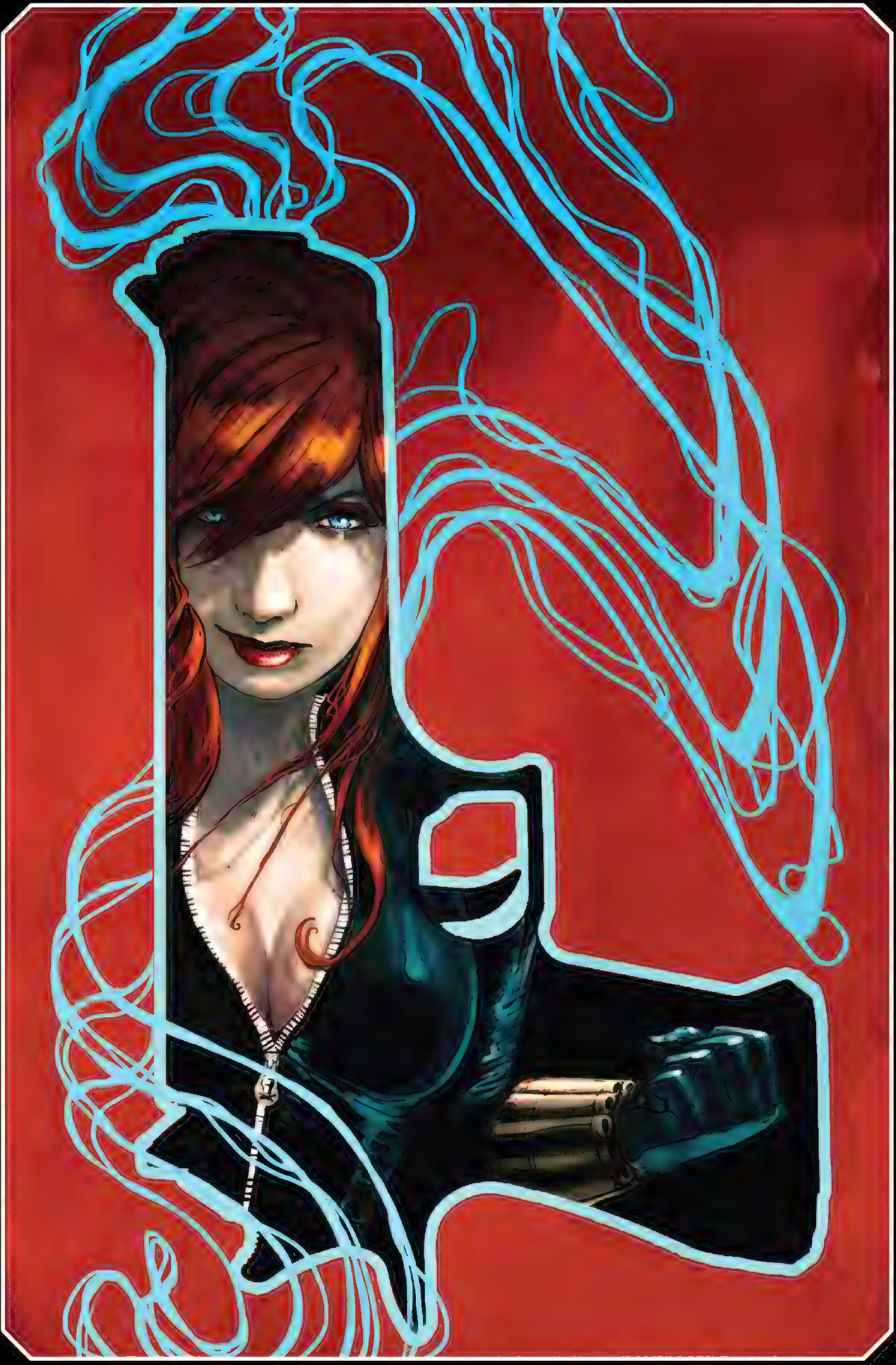
JELENA KEVIC DJURDJEVIĆ

BLACK WIDOW #1 MOVIE VARIANT


BLACK WIDOW

BLACK WIDOW #2 HEROIC AGE VARIANT BY

JOE QUINONES



BLACK WIDOW #2 VARIANT BY

STEPHANIE HANS

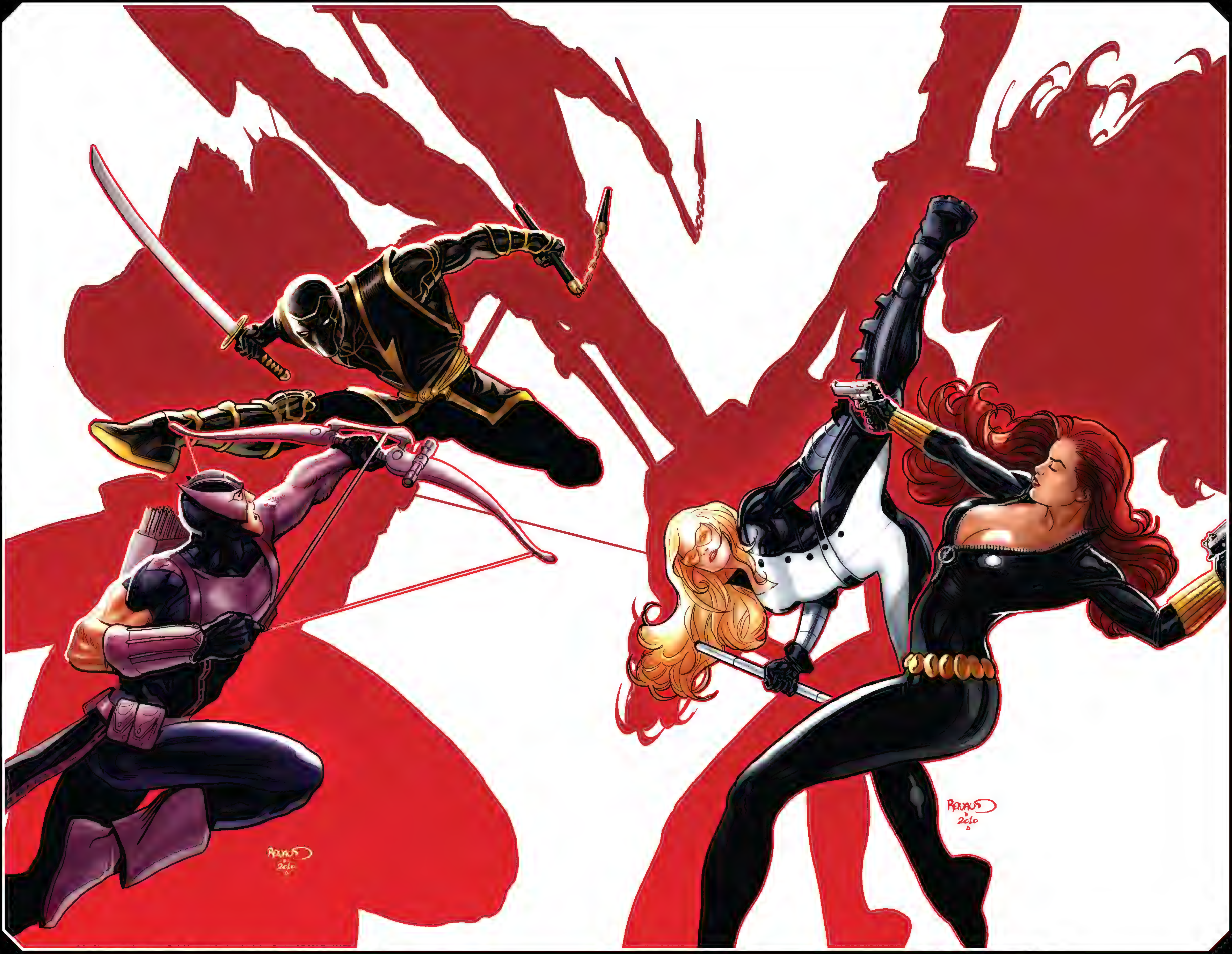
CAMPBELL 2010

BLACK WIDOW #6 VARIANT BY

J. SCOTT CAMPBELL & BRIAN STELFREEZE

BLACK WIDOW #7 VAMPIRE VARIANT BY

STEPHANE PERGER


Renaud 2010
Renaud 2010

WIDOWMAKER #1-2 COMBINED VARIANTS BY

PAUL RENAUD

BLACK WIDOW: A DEADLY ORIGIN PITCH BY

PAUL CORNELL

(FEEDBACK NOTES BY BILL ROSEMANN)

PART ONE

NATALIA stops the theft of an experimental orbital bomber. She's working for TONY STARK. (Unfortunately, Tony is off the board at this time. Could it be a mission for Fury?) She fails to find out where the bomber was being taken.

In a decrepit Russian intelligence communications centre, a forgotten computer indicates the reactivation of the Widowmaker protocol.

IVAN, NATALIA'S old protector, is on the run.

He calls NATALIA, warns her that Widowmaker has been activated and assigned to her.

We see, in flashback, NATALIA'S earliest meeting with IVAN, then a Soviet soldier, as he saves her, as a baby, from the attack by a cell of White Russians that claimed her parents' lives. He raised her as his own, but she was taken from him by the spymaster TARAS ROMANOV, who trained her in martial arts in the Red Room. There she worked with LOGAN and romanced the WINTER SOLDIER. When LOGAN killed TARAS, she went to find IVAN again. She found him dying, and gave him some of her own blood, which resulted in him also benefiting from her extreme longevity and youthfulness. She told him then that, amongst all those who wanted to be her father, she had chosen him. IVAN, as he talks to her now, is hunted down and killed by something from above.

NATALIA, horrified, grieving, goes to the funeral. But the coffin is desecrated, the head and heart of the body removed, a message written on the wall in blood, saying that, for her lifelong treachery against Mother Russia, everyone NATALIA ever cared for will now be killed. Such is the terror of the Widowmaker protocol. (Just a thought: The message could be a symbol or phrase in Russian...like the tattoos in *Eastern Promises*.)

NATALIA doesn't know what that is, but she's going to find out. She declares that she'll match every offense, blood for blood, until IVAN is avenged.

PART TWO

NATALIA breaks into a base in Russia, battles her way past the new CRIMSON DYNAMO, and finds that the current custodians of the Widowmaker protocol seemingly know nothing about why this Soviet relic has been activated again, or who's behind it. Something from the Soviet past seems to have decided to destroy NATALIA'S life. [Could this opening scene have elements that compare/contrast New Russia with Old Russia…to show how the country has fallen…and which could link to Ivan's plot to "redeem" the country? It doesn't have to be here…but perhaps somewhere in issue #1 or #2.]

The sight of the CRIMSON DYNAMO reminds her, in flashback, of life with her husband, the original version of that hero. She also recalls, from decades later, how she went on missions to the USA to try and seduce or destroy TONY STARK, and ended up getting involved with HAWKEYE. It was all an innocent, romantic spy game then. She led a lot of men on, while keeping her real feelings to herself.

In the present, the technicians tell NATALIA that Soviet technology, ripped from the bodies of mutants and aliens, was very advanced. These days they can hardly understand it. The Widowmaker protocol seems to have involved some sort of microscopic robot, which NATALIA had implanted in her lips, ready to be passed on...meaning that everyone she ever kissed, romantically or platonically, now could be some sort of target. It's a literal "Curse of the Black Widow" — she mates, then she kills. [This idea is so, so cool.] NATALIA is furious. She has to move quickly now, she has a lot of people to save.

In the States, CLINT BARTON, as RONIN, finds himself dodging deadly Soviet robot ninjas that are trying to kill him, and at the crucial moment...an image of NATALIA comes into his mind and he finds himself unable to move. [The nanobots in the lipstick is so damn smart and cool – I wish the threat to Ronin could be on par with that…rather than killer robots. Can it be something else? Something more modern, serious and deadly? Could it be something similar to or tied to the deadly kiss? The poisoned kiss is just a perfect symbolic legacy of the Black Widow… mate, then kill, etc.]

PART THREE

NATALIA rescues CLINT (How?), and together they destroy the robots. She refuses his help in dealing with this further, and checks in with BUCKY, MATT MURDOCK, CAPTAIN AMERICA and even HERCULES (some comedy here about how much she got around) and either finds them in combat against the robot ninjas, or warns them to be prepared. (Due to the ongoing Captain America storyline, we can't use Steve here...maybe Wolverine instead?)

Flashbacks to her time as a super hero, how ill at ease she felt in that decadent role, how lost in America, sometimes. She was certain something terrible was coming to get her, that she didn't deserve her long life and youth and the luxuries of capitalism.

And now it seems her fatalistic worries have come true. She goes to see TONY STARK, and together they check her lips for the nanotechnology, find a way to shut it down, work out where they're meant to think the robot ninjas are coming from, and where they're really coming from. They trace them to their source, which is at one of the Lagrange Points, caught between Earth and lunar gravity. TONY wants to go with her, but NATALIA insists on going alone. He lends her a ship capable of getting there. (Again, we unfortunately can't use Tony here...maybe Fury?)

NATALIA finds, floating in space, an enormous Soviet Dreadnought, their equivalent of a Helicarrier. It's being refitted by the modern Russian military in Crimson Dynamo suits.

And in charge of the operation, his brain and nervous system taken from his body and placed in a similar powered suit, is IVAN. (Very cool how this is all coming down to Widow and Ivan. The father/daughter connection is something that readers can connect to.)

PART FOUR

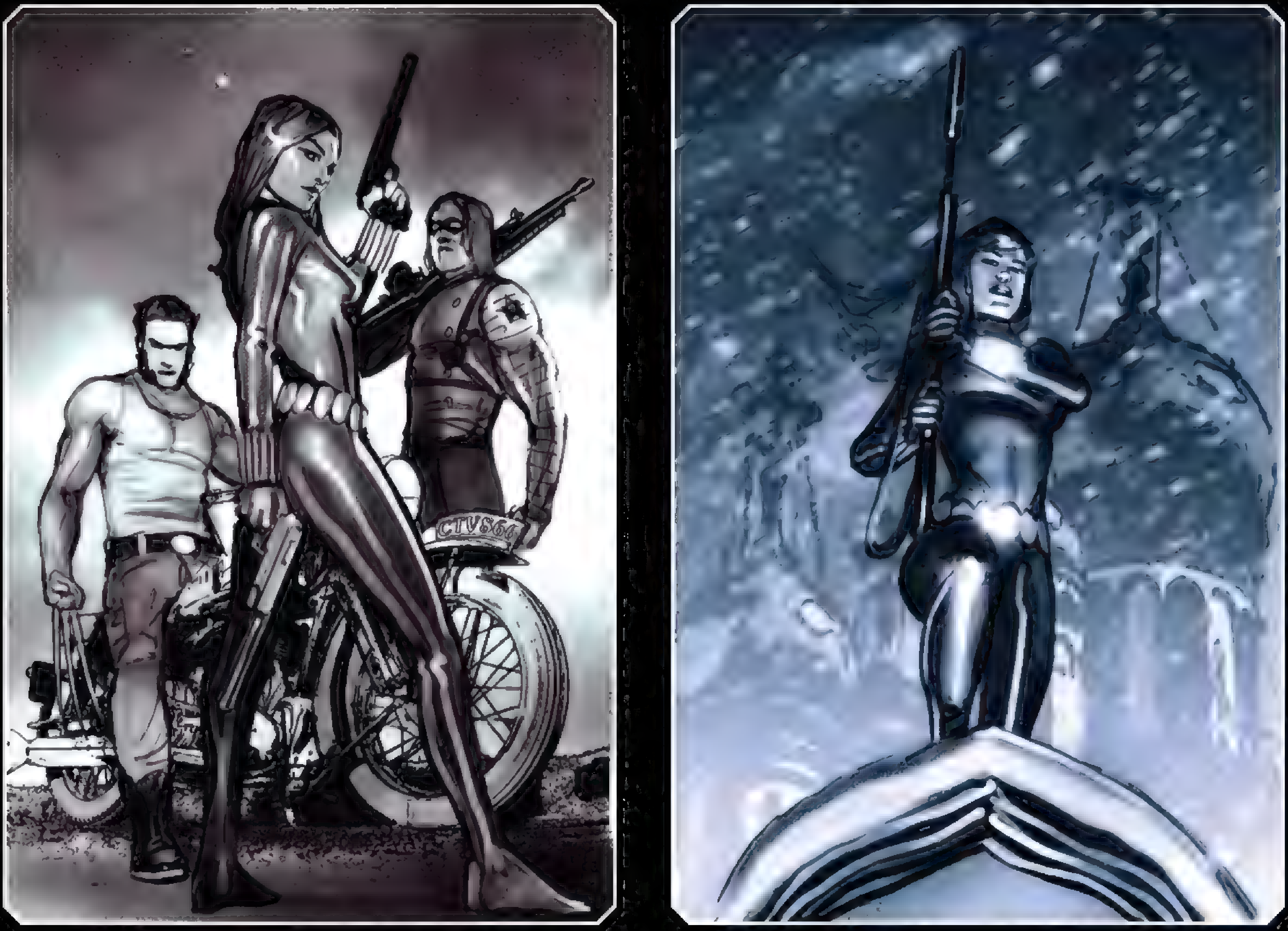
NATALIA sneaks onboard the Dreadnought and is horrified by its power. [What is the Dreadnought's power? What is Ivan's plan for it? We need to see this… and then to make the connection that her mission is now bigger than herself or the ones she loved. She must destroy it to save the entire world.] She's found and fights her way through the CRIMSON DYNAMOS, seeking to escape.

But IVAN stops her. He tells her he's sorry he tried to use the Widowmaker protocol to distract her and send her astray, but she would otherwise have been on the way to discovering that this operation of his was behind the theft of STARK'S new orbital bomber. Some of the technology involved would have formed a good bridge between the mad Soviet tech and the modern Russian version. He hopes she'll agree that he hasn't really harmed anyone apart from himself. And his muscular new warrior body is much better than his podgy old human one. She left him behind so many years ago. Did she get past the need for both her father and her motherland? [Your build of the threat and emotional drama is great…but the whole "I did this to distract you" is a bit of a letdown. Can you build on this father/daughter dynamic? Did he actually intend to kill her past lovers? Does he feel she left him for them? It's smart that he misled her like this…and even tried to take out his "competition"…but can we avoid the distraction angle?]

Flashback to NATALIA tiredly making her way through the tangle of Civil War, Registration and the death of CAPTAIN AMERICA, to her role as mentor and lover to BUCKY as he took on CAP'S role.

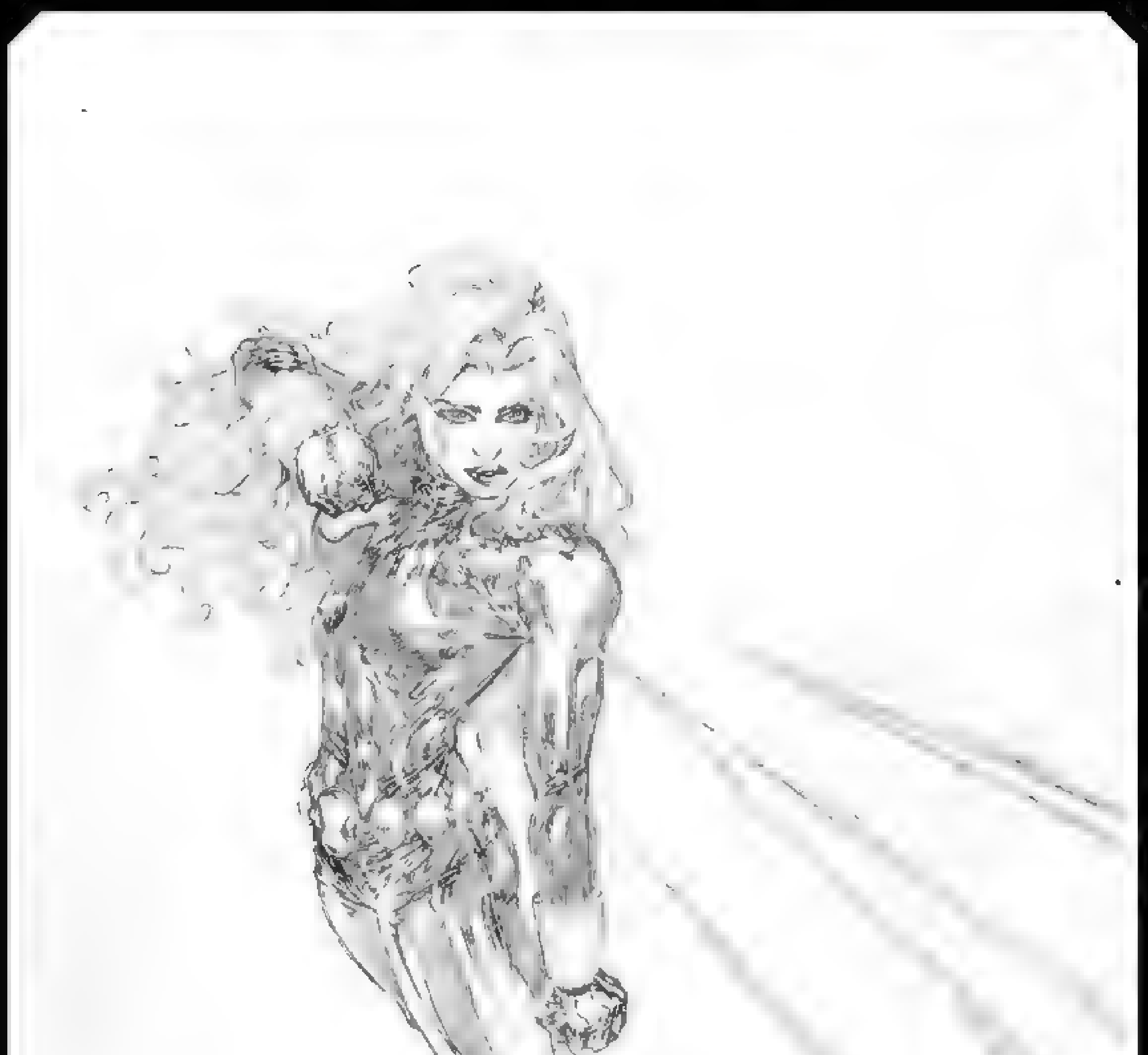
Now, IVAN tells her there's a place for her in the new Russia, in a strong and belligerent new country, filled with a new nationalism. Maybe then she can finally find peace. NATALIA sighingly tells him that she's come to the conclusion that it's the world that's at fault, not her. She's watched political systems come and go, and now hardly believes in anything, except love and justice. But since she feels manipulated by him, and since she wants to demonstrate that she's not defined by these lovers he's tried to manipulate her with the memories of, but rather feels that she has helped to define them –

She takes down the Dreadnought in a brilliant display of one-woman destruction and sends the crew fleeing back to Earth. Including IVAN, who watches her leave in an escape pod –



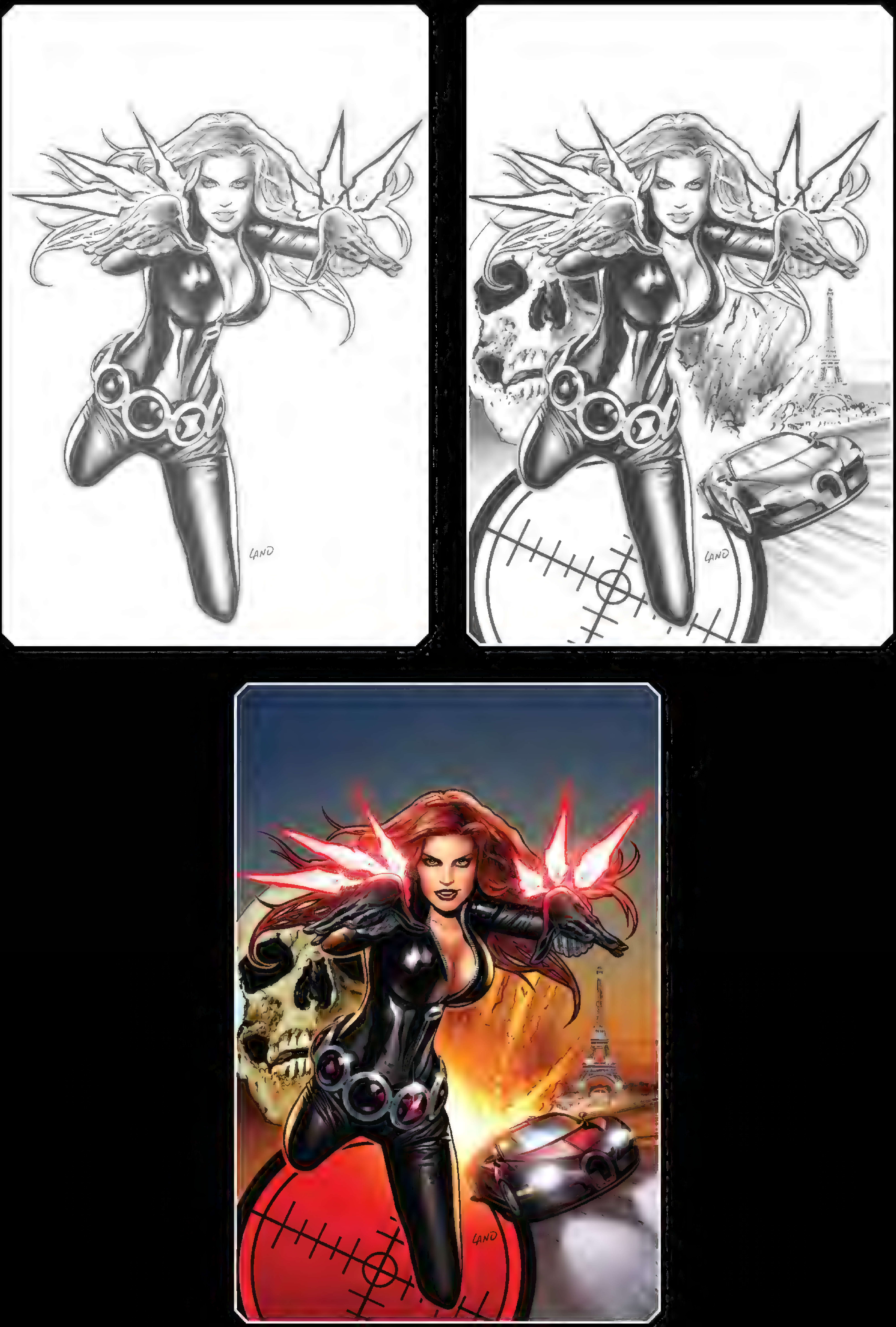
BLACK WIDOW: DEADLY ORIGIN #1-2 COVER SKETCHES BY

ADI GRANOV



BLACK WIDOW: DEADLY ORIGIN #1 VARIANT COVER PENCILS BY

TOM RANEY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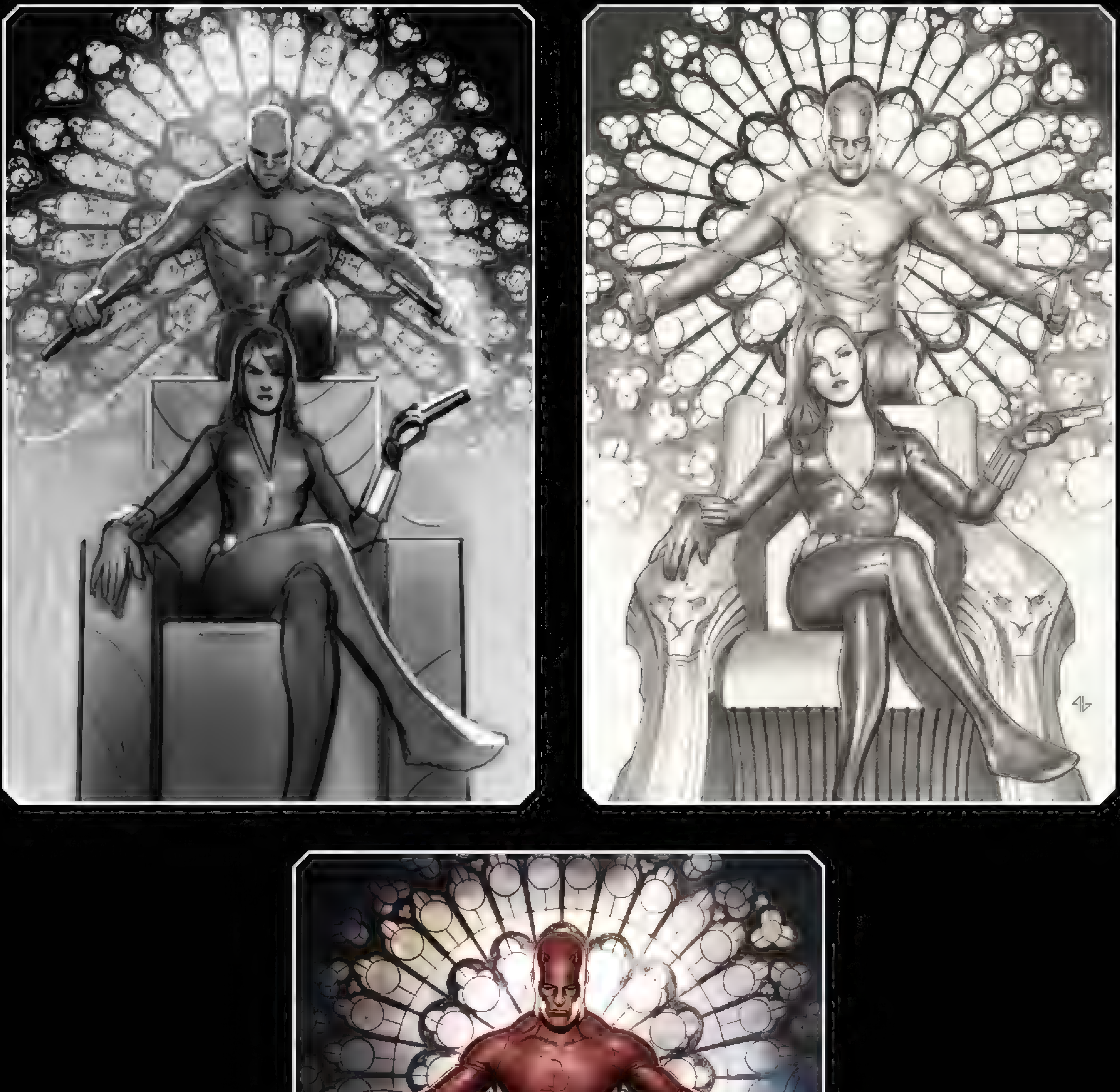
GREG LAND



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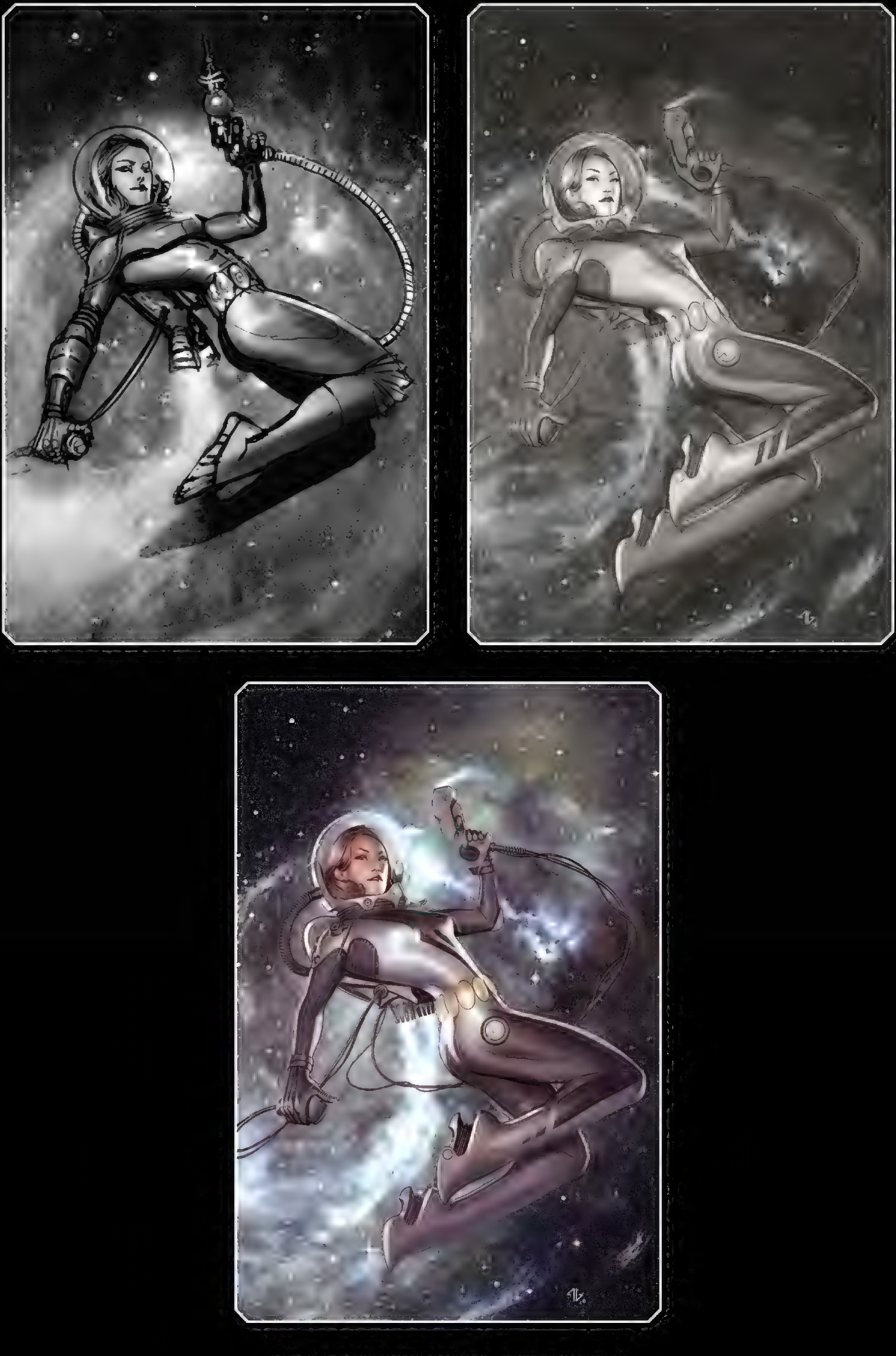

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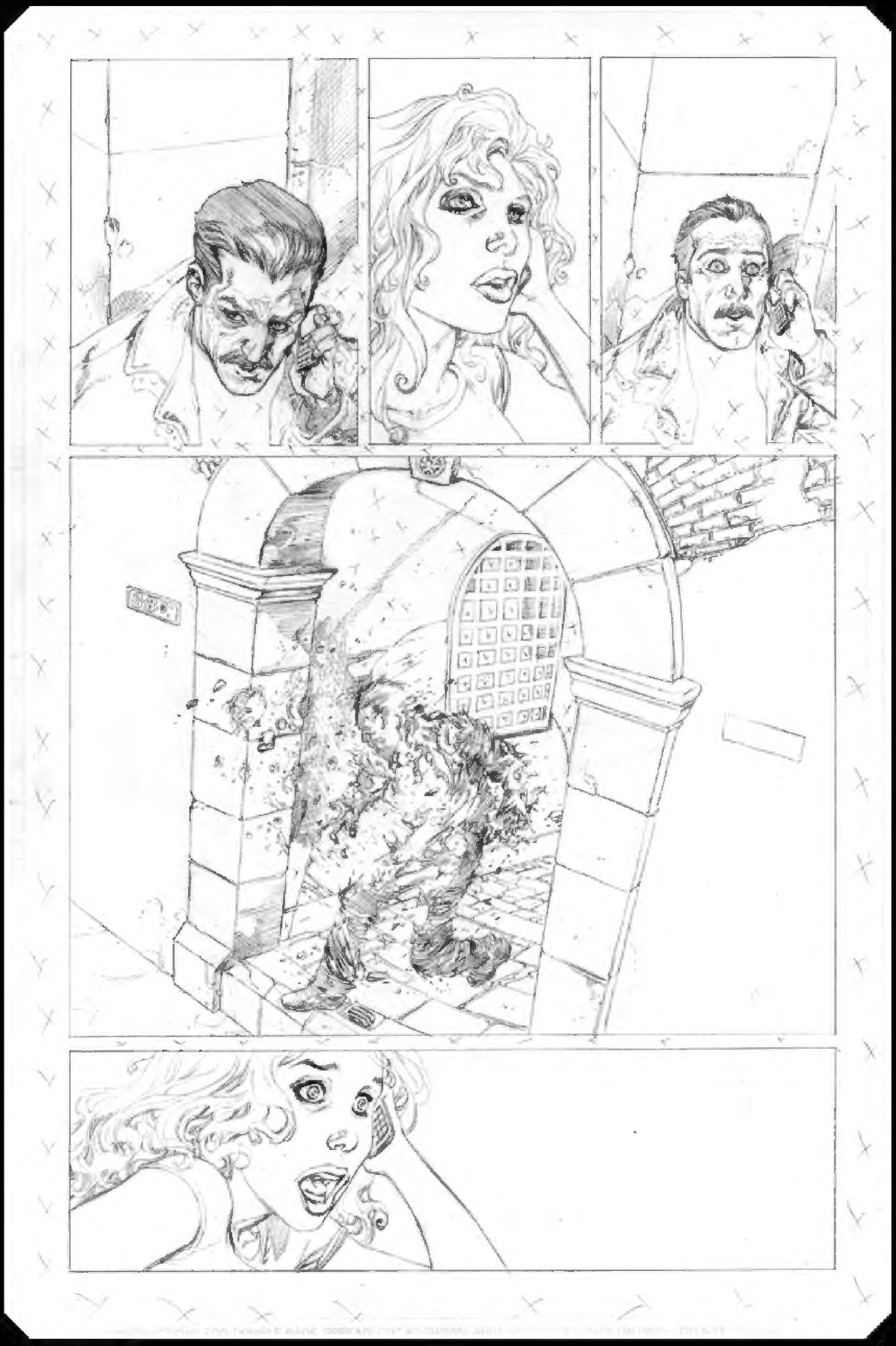

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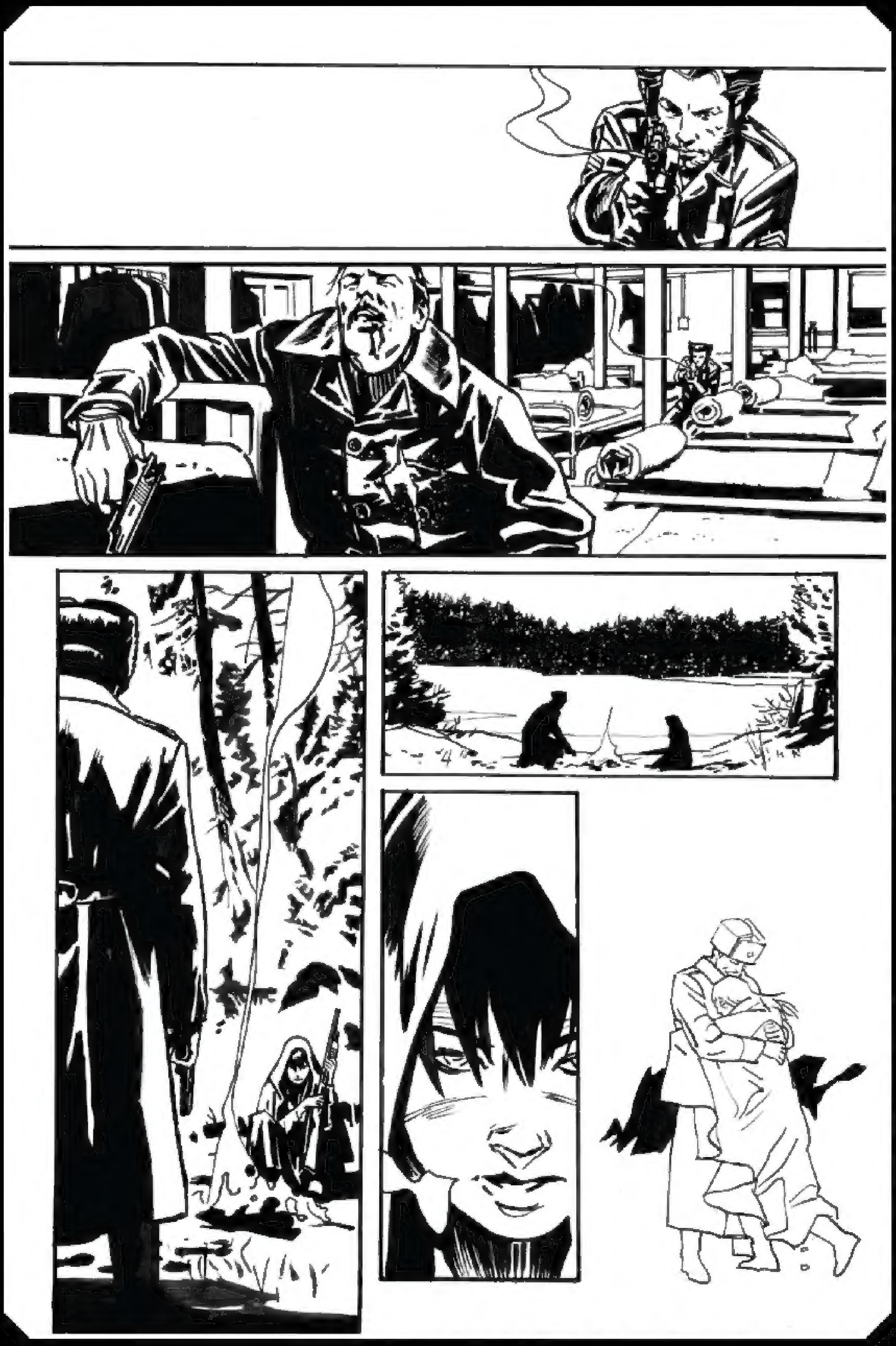

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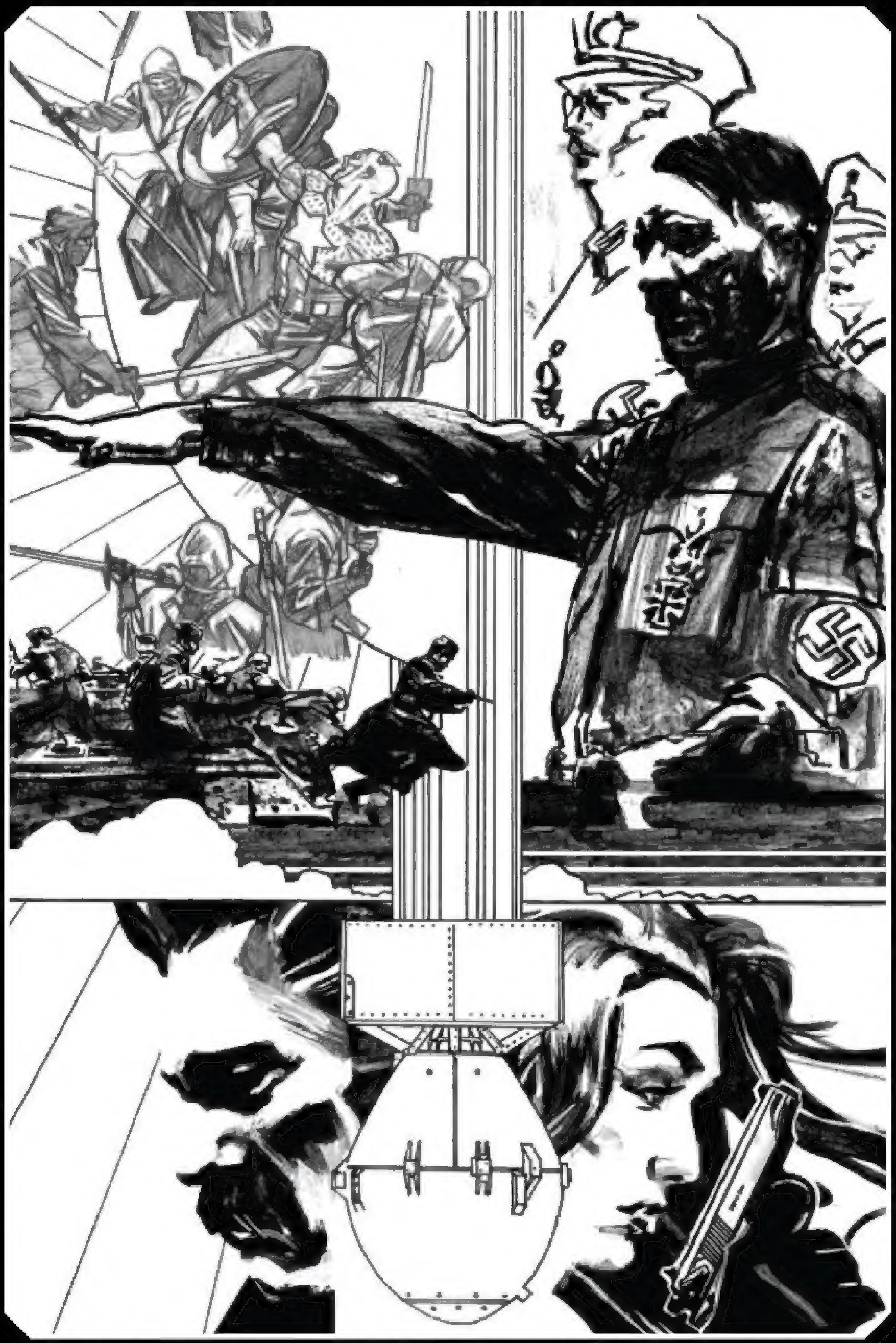
JOHN PAUL LEON



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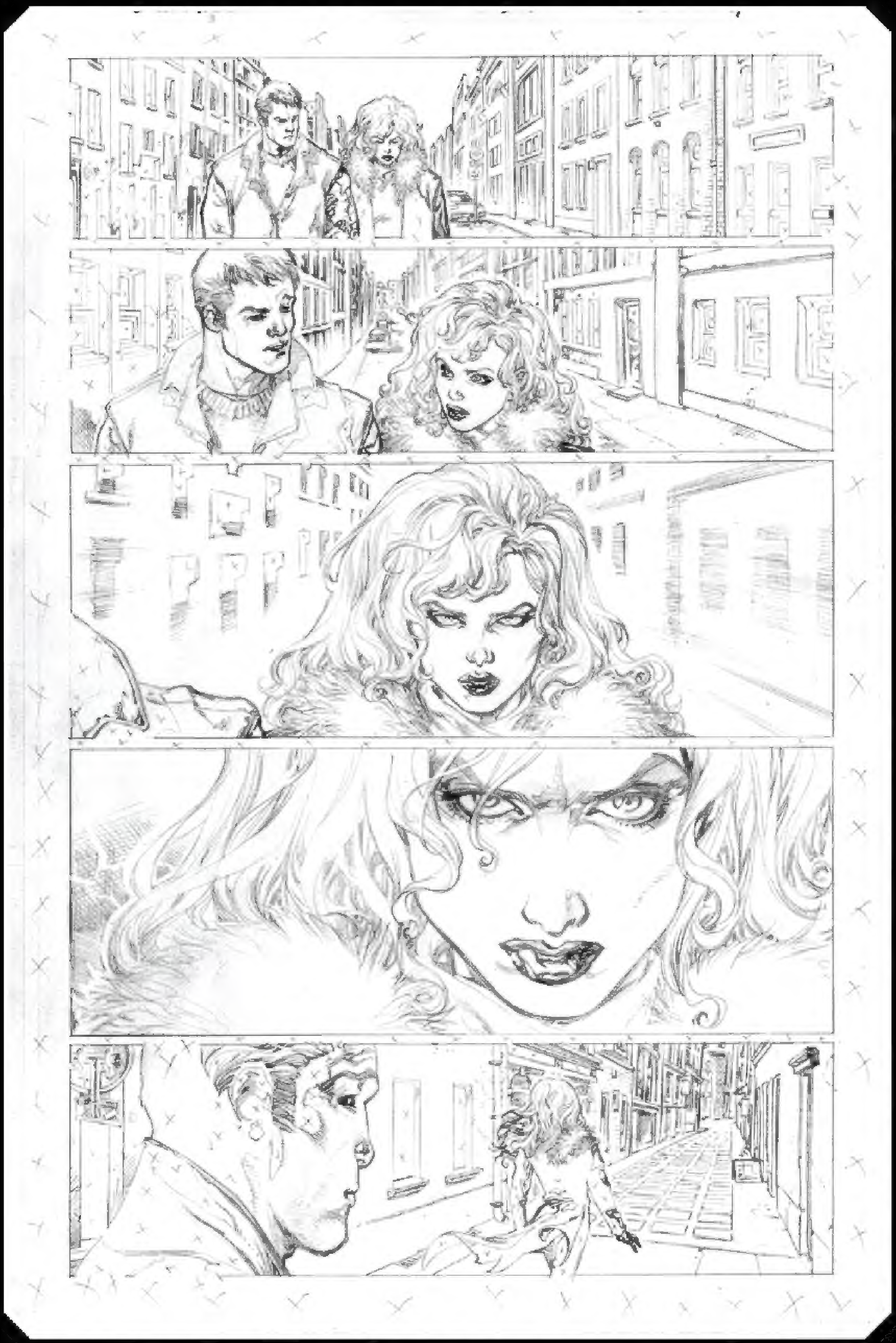

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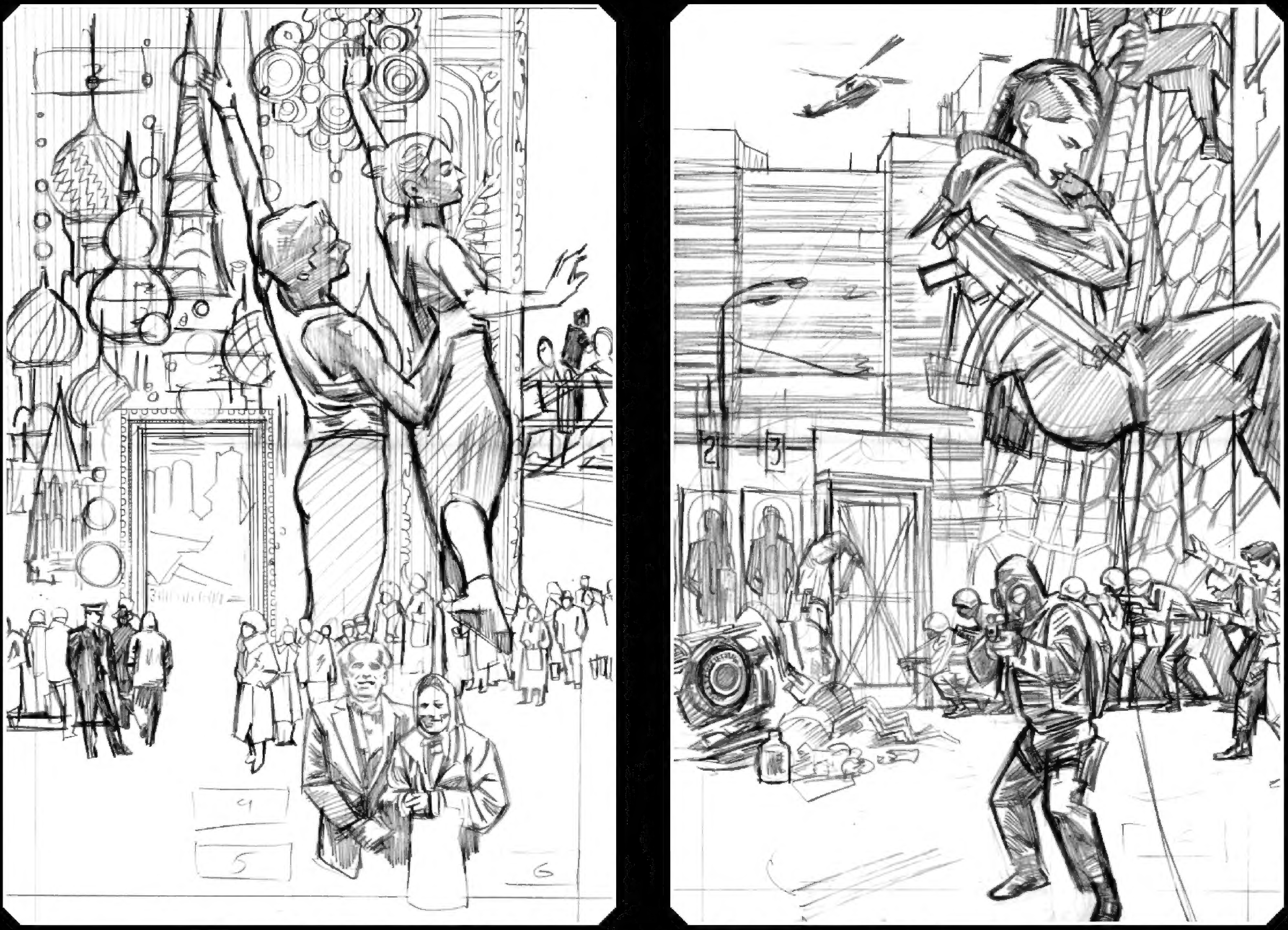

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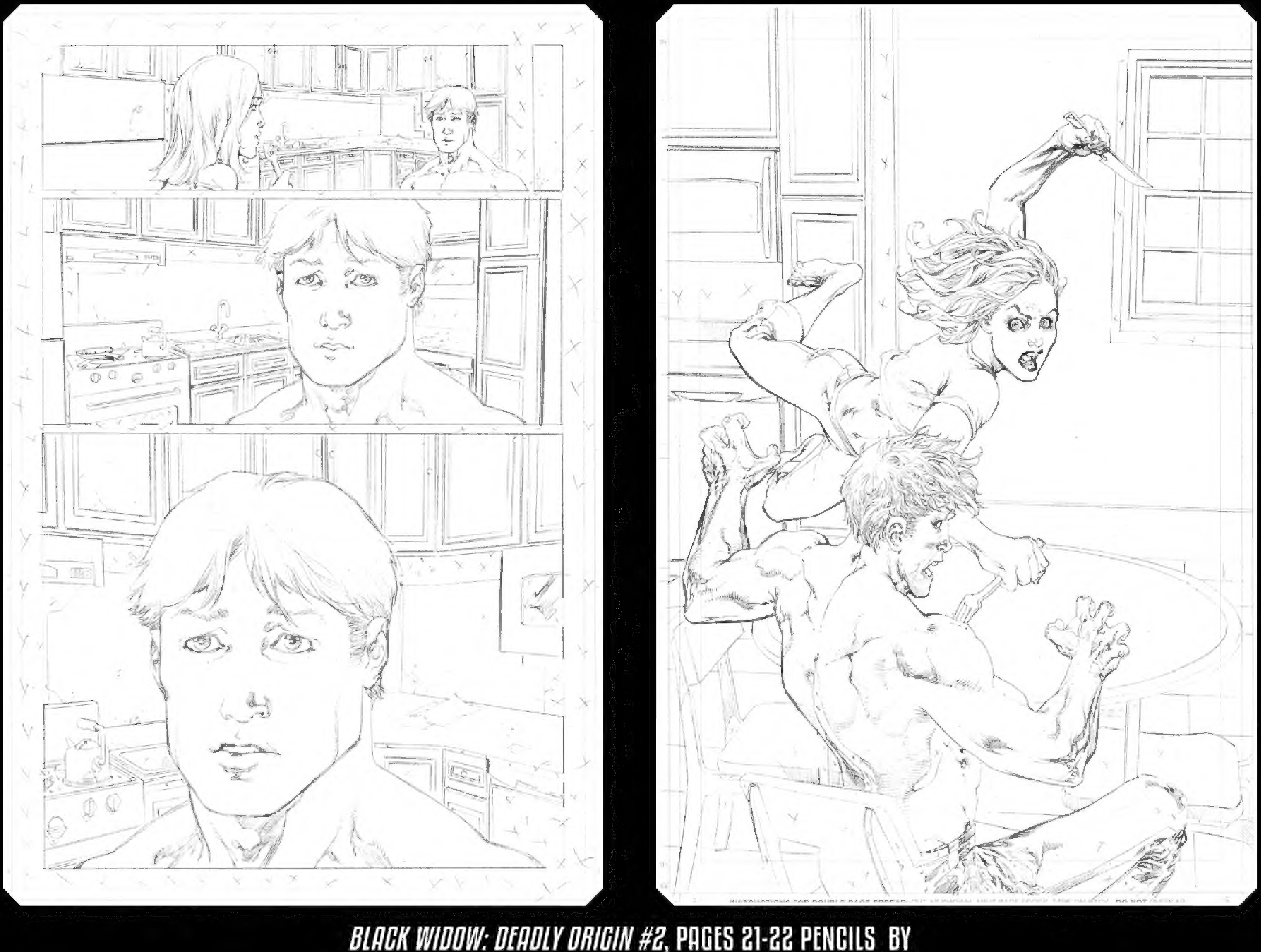

BLACK WIDOW: DEADLY ORIGIN #2, PAGES 21-22 PENCILS BY

TOM RANEY

IRON MAN: KISS AND KILL PINUP BY

STEPHANIE HANS

THRILLING ADVENTURES OF
MARVEL'S DEADLIEST SUPERSPY!

Natasha's shadowy past once again threatens all she holds dear in a globe-hopping thriller! As the Black Widow's house of cards comes crashing down around her, what will she do to keep her deepest secret buried? When a senator is seduced and assassinated, why does the trail his journalist son follows lead back to Natasha? Meanwhile, espionage agents around the world are being assassinated by an all-new Ronin! The next two targets: Black Widow and Mockingbird! But Hawkeye is determined to unmask the killer! Let the spy games begin!

Collecting ***Black Widow: Deadly Origin #1-4***, ***Black Widow (2010) #1-8***, ***Widowmaker #1-4***, ***Fear Itself: Black Widow***, ***Black Widow Saga***, and material from ***Enter the Heroic Age #1*** and ***Iron Man: Kiss and Kill*** — written by Paul Cornell, Marjorie Liu, Duane Swierczynski, Jim McCann, Cullen Bunn, Kelly Sue DeConnick and Joe Ahearne; and illustrated by John Paul Leon, Tom Raney, Daniel Acuña, Manuel Garcia, David Lopez, Peter Nguyen, Jamie McKelvie and Brian Ching.

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